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With the adoption of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) by North Carolina, local school districts are encouraged to develop CCSS-aligned curricula that that are culturally relevant for an area's students. However, defining the culture of a community becomes increasingly complex in urban areas with significant numbers of rural students. Addressing cultural relevancy in the curricula within communities where rural and urban cultures intersect, thus, requires a conceptualization of a rurban space that lies between the rural and the urban. Supported by research on the rural-urban distinction, rural culture, and school-university-community collaborations, this dissertation makes the case for the use of transformative curricular design informed by a critical rurban pedagogy to be utilized by urban counties with significant populations of rural students in order to better integrate rural students into urbanized schools. Using a case study of an urban county in Central North Carolina that has a significant rural population, this study seeks to answer the question, "How can local definitions of rural culture be used to construct fruitful collaborations for curricular reform between schools, institutions of higher education, and communities?" Through document analysis, surveys, semi-structured interviews, and generational narratives, this study collected and analyzed local stories to inform a process of transformative curricular design around a critical rurban pedagogy that may connect the culture of the area with the Common Core State Standards.

THE COUNTRY MOUSE IN THE CITY SCHOOL HOUSE: MAKING THE CASE FOR A CRITICAL RURBAN PEDAGOGY

by

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Approved by

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"What we observe is not necessarily the truth, but that's how I felt and that's how I experienced it." ~ "James" (Study Participant)

APPROVAL PAGE

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Data on school enrollment in the last decade show that approximately 30% of all students attend schools in rural areas (Jimerson, 2005); over 20% of all K-12 students are enrolled in rural schools (Brown & Schafft, 2011); and 19% of U.S. public school students are enrolled in rural school districts (Johnson & Strange, 2009). Nationally, 29% of all rural schools are located in the smallest rural communities, with 58% of eligible schools in these small rural areas designated as Title 1 schools (Jimerson, 2005). Yet, rural students also are present in urban areas, with urban schools educating over 30% of all students (Brown & Schafft, 2011). Thus, rural students will bring to urban settings their own unique culture and challenges, including the fact that 22% of rural students are racial and ethnic minorities and 35% live in poverty (Jimerson, 2005). Identifying the characteristics of rural culture in a particular urban county cannot be done without hearing the stories of those who live and/or work in these areas.

In order to inform such a study, awareness of rural culture and avenues for constructing culturally relevant curriculum, first, must be developed. Thus, the purpose of this study is to hear the stories of educational stakeholders (teachers, curriculum specialists, university faculty, community members, etc.) in an urban county with a significant rural population in order to inform the co-construction of transformative curricula that are culturally relevant for rural students in this area.

Description of the Problem

Among the states with the highest rural enrollments, North Carolina, Texas, Georgia, and Ohio serve one in four of all rural students in the US, with NC ranking first of all 50 U.S. states in total number of rural students (N = 676,941; the U.S. median is N = 131,129) and second in number of rural students in concentrated poverty (located within the poorest rural school districts in the state; N = 45,548; the U.S. median is N = 11,689; Johnson & Strange, 2009). More than one in three rural students in NC are racial or ethnic minorities and 78.4% of these rural minority students are living in poverty (Johnson & Strange, 2009). North Carolina also is the highest ranking Eastern state in percentage of rural English Language Learners (ELL; 7.6%; Johnson & Strange, 2009). Yet, instructional spending per pupil is low ($4,561 per student statewide and $4,993 per student in the poorest school districts in NC; Johnson & Strange, 2009).

North Carolina also ranks third in median organizational scale, which measures school and district size (Johnson & Strange, 2009). According to Johnson and Strange (2009), larger school and district size has been connected with negative academic outcomes, especially for minority students and students in poverty. Among the most alarming of these negative academic outcomes observed in NC is the rural high school graduation rate of 66.5% (only 50.9% for rural students in concentrated poverty; Johnson & Strange, 2009). Additionally, when compared to urban and suburban youth, many Southern rural youth, especially students of color, are less likely to be academically prepared for entry into postsecondary institutions (Schramm-Pate, 2002). All of these factors place NC seventh on the Rural and Community Trusts' priority ranking,

indicating a critical need for policymakers to address rural education issues in the state (Johnson & Strange, 2009). Johnson and Strange (2009) have argued that rural areas are "wrongly assumed to be uniform in character and circumstance" (p. 25) and are often defined by how they are unlike urban areas. Instead, Johnson and Strange (2009) have called for the development of strategies that are appropriate for the unique circumstances of rural schools and students in particular regions.

Identification of a Solution

Aldridge and Goldman (2007) have contended that the current curriculum present in many schools throughout the United States is "so highly rationalized and regimented that it lacks interest about students" (p. 5) and fails to attend to the needs of diverse students. Thus, improving the educational experience for rural students will require a concerted effort to attend to the unique culture and needs of rural residents. Yet, attempts to improve curriculum for rural students in K-12 education cannot occur in isolation. Because education programs within institutions of higher education (IHEs) prepare teachers and educational leaders for curriculum development and facilitation and because IHEs tend to have greater access to resources than K-12 institutions, collaboration between K-12 schools and IHEs seems essential for curricular reform. Additionally, because community involvement has been shown to be a key to rural school reform, attempts to adapt curriculum to attend to the needs of rural students should include the combined efforts of schools, IHEs, and communities (Casey, 1998).

Because NC has a significant number of IHEs, with 46 IHEs having Department of Public Instruction (DPI)-approved teacher education programs (DPI, 2008),

opportunities exist for collaborative efforts between these IHEs, schools, and communities that support the education of rural students. *Figure 1*, which was created using Geographic Information System (GIS) software, identifies the urban and rural counties based on the criteria adopted by the N.C. Rural Economic Development Center, Inc. and the North Carolina General Assembly (Geographic Research, Inc., n.d.b) and includes markers designating the locations of IHEs with DPI-approved teacher education programs (Infogroup, Inc., 2011):

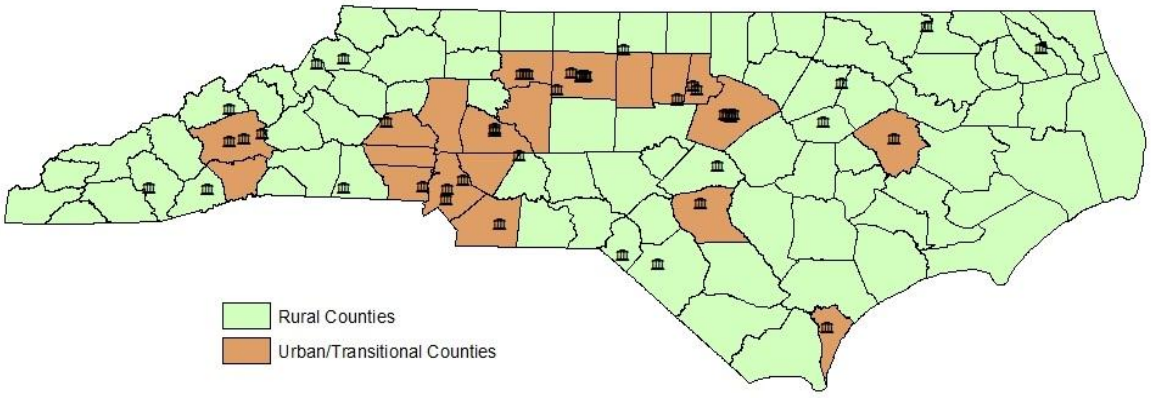

Figure 1. Map of Urban/Transitional and Rural Counties of North Carolina. The figure includes the locations of IHEs with DPI-approved teacher education programs.

While most of these teacher education programs are located in the Piedmont (central) region of the state, these IHEs also are present throughout NC (in the Mountain [western] and Coastal Plain [eastern] regions as well the Piedmont), in both urban and rural counties.

Opportunities for Curricular Reform

Though the now-defunct N.C. Rural Economic Development Center, Inc. (2011b), having been absorbed into the N.C. Commerce Department's new Rural Economic Development Division in 2013, identified a number of university- and community college-sponsored initiatives aimed at improving the economic stability of rural (and non-rural) areas of NC as well as the skill-building and leadership development of individuals in rural (and non-rural) areas, these collaborations and partnerships were established within an economic framework, only including the cultural diversity of rural areas as a secondary focus, if included at all. In fact, communication with several staff members from the DPI Academic Service and Instructional Support unit reveals that NC does not have its own definition of rural education, schools, or districts (D. Brown & R. Muhammad, personal communication, October 25-26, 2011). Instead, in implementing the Rural Education Achievement Program (REAP), which provides resources for rural schools and districts to more effectively utilize federal grants, DPI adopts the definitions and criteria for rural school districts identified by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES; R. Muhammad, personal communication, October 25, 2011).

The NCES uses an urban-centric locale classification system that was released in 2006 in which rural areas are those areas that do not lie inside urban areas or clusters (Provasnik et al., 2007). According to the NCES (n.d.), this classification system was refined after the 2000 U.S. Census due to improvements in geocoding technology and the Office of Management and Budget's changing definitions of metropolitan and nonmetropolitan areas. With this new technology, the exact latitude and longitude of

schools can be determined for 91% of schools, with the locations of the remaining 9% of schools being less exact (NCES, n.d.). With the precise locations of most schools, updated yearly, the locale codes for school districts are based on the locale codes of the schools in the districts, not the district office addresses (NCES, n.d.). Thus, if 50% or more of the schools in a school district are designated as rural, the district will be designated as rural as well, even if the district office is located in an urban area. The major category (urban, suburban, town, or rural) that represents the greatest percentage of students determines the locale code of the district (NCES, n.d.).

At the county level, the former N.C. Rural Economic Development Center (2011a) defined rural counties as those with a population density of no more than 250 people per square mile based on U.S. Census data. Since this definition of a rural county has been incorporated into legislation adopted by the North Carolina General Assembly (N.C. Rural and Economic Development Center, Inc., 2011a), this criteria has been used to determine the urban and rural counties of North Carolina based on the 2010 Census data. Analyses of these data from the SimplyMap database (Geographic Research, Inc., n.d.b) as well as communication with the former N.C. Rural Economic Development Center, Inc. (P. Woodie, personal communication, November 4, 2011) reveal that 20 of NC's 100 counties are considered urban or "transitional" (i.e., those that only received urban designations with the most recent Census, thus still receiving the support of the former N.C. Rural Economic Development Center, Inc. through 2013, with future funding priorities currently undetermined by the new Rural Economic Division of the N.C. Commerce Department). From largest to smallest (in terms of population density),

these urban or transitional counties are: Mecklenburg, Wake, New Hanover, Durham, Forsyth, Guilford, Gaston, Cumberland, Cabarrus, Catawba, Buncombe, Alamance, Orange, Union, Davidson, Henderson, Iredell, Rowan, Lincoln, and Pitt. The remaining 80 counties in NC are considered rural. Reviewing the Common Core of Data (NCES, 2011a) for NC's traditional and charter public schools reveals that 105 N.C. school districts are considered urban (53 city, 18 suburban, and 35 town) while 111 districts are considered rural. Yet, closer analysis using SimplyMap (Geographic Research, Inc., n.d.a) and the Common Core of Data (NCES, 2011b) shows that more than 25% of the schools in 12 of the 20 urban or transitional counties are considered rural schools. Thus, with such large numbers of rural students, even the urban counties in NC are likely to include significant numbers of rural students. This presents unique opportunities for the development of curriculum that is inclusive of rural culture even within urban counties.

Cultural relevance in the Common Core. One strategy for improving education is to connect academic content with students' culture. In fact, the adaptation of curricula to be culturally relevant for students in a particular area is one of the features of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) newly adopted by NC and 44 other U.S. states. The CCSS "represent a set of expectations for student knowledge and skills that high school graduates need to master to succeed in college and careers" (NGA Center & CCSSO, 2010, p. 1), regardless of the state in which one lives. These standards, developed by the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) and the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices (NGA Center) in collaboration with various educational stakeholders (teachers, researchers, community groups,

organizations, etc.), seek to improve college- and career-readiness by attending to the following criteria:

- Aligned with college and work expectations;
- Include rigorous content *and* application of knowledge through high-order skills;
- Build upon strengths and lessons of current state standards;
- Informed by top-performing countries, so that all students are prepared to succeed in our global economy and society; and,
- Evidence and/or research-based. (NGA Center & CCSSO, 2010, p. 1)

With a goal of being "essential, rigorous, clear and specific, coherent, and internationally benchmarked" in order to "ensure all students are prepared for all entry-level, credit-bearing, academic college courses in English, mathematics, the sciences, the social sciences, and the humanities" (i.e., able to make a C or better in these classes) as well as "workforce training programs" (NGA Center & CCSSO, 2010, p. 2), the CCSS outline both the content and skills that are deemed "critical" for student success without being overly prescriptive (NGA Center & CCSSO, 2010). In fact, the Common Core State Standards Initiative (CCSSI) makes clear that "standards are not curriculum" and that "the curriculum that follows will continue to be a local responsibility (or state-led, where appropriate)" (NGA Center & CCSSO, 2010, p. 4).

With an implementation goal of 2014, state-level officials, like DPI in North Carolina, and local school districts have been in the process of creating working documents for implementation of the standards (Hill, 2011). With such a significant overhaul of the participating states' standards, curriculum development and training are essential components of this implementation process. With CCSS-based assessments

scheduled to become available in 2014-15 (Sawchuk, 2012), it seems likely that local districts will continue working on CCSS-aligned curricula long after these standards are implemented. Such a condensed timeline creates a necessity for collaborative efforts in curriculum development.

While the CCSSI does not include curriculum, it does provide guidelines from which curriculum developers might work. Among the guidelines of most significance to educational stakeholders interested in serving rural students in urban counties is the criteria that "the standards will not prescribe *how* they are taught and learned but will allow teachers flexibility to teach and students to learn in various instructionally relevant contexts" (NGA Center & CCSSO, 2010, p. 3). Additionally, while the CCSS outline some critical content and skills to be covered by all participating states, decisions about the other content that should be covered is "left to state and local determination" (CCSSI, 2012b, para. 7), with teachers being directed to "continue to devise lesson plans and tailor instruction to the individual needs of the students in their classrooms" (CCSSI, 2012c, para. 7). In fact, during a training presented by DPI (IHE Common Core and Essential Standards Institute, Meredith College, October 7, 2011) on the CCSS and the N.C. Essential Standards, various representatives from DPI reiterated multiple times the need for districts to adapt the working documents created by the state and develop curriculum that is locally relevant. This emphasis on local control in curriculum development and implementation of the CCSS leaves room for the inclusion of cultural relevancy in the curriculum.

Ladson-Billings (1994) has defined culturally relevant teaching as "a pedagogy that empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes" (pp. 17-18). She coined the term "culturally relevant curriculum" after noting a need for a "theory of culturally focused pedagogy that might be considered in the reformation of teacher education" (Ladson-Billings, 1995b, p. 466) and that provided a "synergistic relationship between home/community culture and school culture" versus simply accommodating "student culture to mainstream culture" (p. 467). After noting that African-American students' "academic success came at the expense of their cultural and psychosocial well-being (Fine, 1986; Fordham, 1988)" (Ladson-Billings, 1995b, p. 475), Ladson-Billings (1992) has seen a need to recognize "African-American culture as an important strength upon which to construct the schooling experience" (p. 314). According to Ladson-Billings (1995b), this type of culturally relevant pedagogy "must provide a way for students to maintain their cultural integrity while succeeding academically" while also enabling them to "recognize, understand, and critique current social inequalities" (p. 476).

Like the African-American students that Ladson-Billings has observed, rural students might be considered a marginalized student population in an increasingly urbanized schooling structure. Thus, the primary goal of culturally relevant teaching, which Ladson-Billings (1992) has seen as collectively "empower[ing] students to examine critically the society in which they live and to work for social change" (p. 314), seems as relevant to the teaching of rural students as it does to the teaching of African-American students.

Ladson-Billings (1995b) has argued that the "next step for positing effective pedagogical practice is a theoretical model that not only addresses student achievement but also helps students to accept and affirm their cultural identity while developing critical perspectives that challenge inequities that schools (and other institutions) perpetuate," which she has termed "culturally relevant pedagogy" (p. 469). Yet, with the unique cultural influences of locale, ensuring that this culturally relevant pedagogy includes local culture seems especially necessary for reaching rural students within urban counties. Thus, the curricular design process should be intentional in connecting the standards for student learning with local culture.

Relevant stories in transformative curriculum. Henderson and Hawthorne (2000) have described the transformative approach to curricular design as involving a curriculum design committee of various educational stakeholders (e.g., teachers, university faculty, and community members), who develop local curriculum around set standards for student learning while attending to "alternative views of subject, self, and social learning" (p. 5). In this alternative view of curriculum, learning centers on connecting content to students' lives in order to construct meaning and involves increased focus on inquiry and issues of equity and diversity (Henderson & Hawthorne, 2000). Thus, transformative curricular design necessitates an understanding of the world in which students live.

In order to gain this understanding, Henderson and Hawthorne (2000) have suggested that a key task of the curricular design committee is to collect and analyze narratives that allow individuals to share meaningful learning experiences. As will be

discussed further in “Chapter VI: Methodology,” the rural school district in the urban county in Central NC selected for this study has participated in a curricular design process around the CCSS that involved most steps in the transformative curricular design process: collecting and alayzing curriculum maps, examining the standards, constructing goals and rationale, developing a conceptual vision for the curriculum, and planning the curriculum (Henderson & Hawthorne, 2000). However, the collection of meaningful stories was missing from the curricular design process, leaving a potential gap in the inclusion of cultural relevancy. Thus, before curricula can be adapted to be culturally relevant for students of a particular area, one must have an understanding of the culture of that area. This study attempts to begin this process in one urban county with a significant rural population through document analysis, surveys, semi-structured interviews, and generational narratives regarding rural culture with educational stakeholders who live and/or work in this area.

Purpose of the Study

While school-university-community collaborations have been established between various IHEs and school districts throughout the state, few have attended to the unique needs of rural students within areas with a growing urban economy and university/college population. Additionally, despite the existing research on rural education and the challenges facing the rural student population, previous research has not focused on rural students attending school in urban counties. Thus, future research on school-university-community collaborations in urban counties with significant rural populations might focus on the co-construction of transformative curriculum that is inclusive of the diverse

rural cultures of the Coastal Plain, Piedmont, and Mountain regions of NC and that values equitable power between schools, universities, and communities within these collaborations.

In order to begin to consider collaborative efforts for curricular reform that attends to the unique culture and needs of rural students in urban counties, the following research questions need to be explored in one such urban county in Central NC:

- How might local definitions of rural culture be used to construct fruitful collaborations for curricular reform between schools, IHEs, and communities?
    - To what degree is rural culture included in curriculum development and implementation in this urban N.C. county?
    - What do the narratives of educational stakeholders (teachers, curriculum specialists, university faculty, community members, etc.) suggest about rural culture in this particular area of NC?

To answer the aforementioned research questions, surveys, semi-structured interviews, and narrative interviews will be conducted with educational stakeholders (K-12 teachers and curriculum specialists, college/university faculty, and community members) in an urban county in NC selected based on the presence of a DPI-approved teacher education program within the county and a significant percentage of rural schools within the urban county (i.e., 25% or more of the schools designated as rural). While elaboration on site-selection is included in "Chapter VI: Methodology," any attempts to advocate for the inclusion of rural culture in the local curricula developed as part of a school-university-community collaboration within an urban county, first, necessitates an understanding of

the etymological evolution of the meaning of "rural" that has resulted in the actual and interpreted experiences of rural individuals being devalued or ignored.

Outline of the Chapters

Because individual and collective (modern) experiences are shaped by history and help to reinforce or reform perceptions, acknowledgement of the historical evolution of the rural-urban distinction and modern perspectives on rural culture are essential. Likewise, an understanding of the theoretical framework and positionality that foreground this study also are important to disclose. "Chapter II" provides an overview of the conceptual and theoretical framework that informs this researcher's position that a study examining the constructed meaning of the rural experience in one urban area may serve to inform future efforts to co-construct transformative curricula that are culturally relevant for all students. With the transparency of positionality established, "Chapter III," then, proceeds to examine the evolution of the rural-urban distinction, making the case for the inclusion of a "rurban" understanding, with elements from both rural and urban experiences. "Chapter IV" narrows the focus to rural culture, reviewing the literature on the meanings of rural from the perceived strengths and challenges of the population to the origins of rural marginality and the development of rural stereotypes. With the complexities of the place-based identities recognized, review of the strengths, challenges, and history of school-university-community collaborations included in "Chapter V" serves to provide additional support for a study that seeks to examine implications for the co-construction of curricula that attend to rural culture within urban counties. "Chapter VI" introduces the study participants and reviews the methodology for this study, which

attends to the aforementioned research questions in order to set the stage for future collaboration that recognizes place as an important aspect of cultural inclusion. In "Chapter VII," analysis of the reviewed documents and the survey, interview, and narrative responses is provided through the description of the rurban complexities identified from the data and three key rural values common to the experiences of all study participants. Finally, "Chapter VIII" describes how transformative curricular design framed within a critical rurban pedagogy may be used to construct CCSS-aligned curricula around the rural values described in "Chapter VII." The strengths and limitations of the study as well as plans for future research and study conclusions are provided in the closing chapter as well.

CHAPTER II

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In light of continued efforts to standardize and nationalize curriculum, aspects that govern modern curriculum development, such as the creation of standards, are becoming further removed from local districts. The current educational climate has seen the adoption of the national Common Core State Standards (CCSS) by 45 U.S. states, including North Carolina, which were developed with national expectations for college- and career-readiness as the foundation (NGA Center & CCSSO, 2010). Despite this national agenda, the development of standards-aligned curriculum still is viewed as being the role of the states and local districts (NGA Center & CCSSO, 2010). Thus, even with the development of *common* goals, the distinctions between peoples and places within the US are recognized as important considerations in the development of curriculum.

According to Gruenewald (2003), "Place…foregrounds a narrative of local and regional politics that is attuned to the particularities of where people actually live, and that is connected to global development trends that impact local places" (p. 3). Therefore, standards that seek to "include rigorous content *and* application of knowledge through high-order skills" (NGA Center & CCSSO, 2010, p. 1) require curricula that are locally relevant. In Gruenewald's (2003) estimation, pedagogies that focus on place "are needed so that the education of its citizens might have some direct bearing on the well-being of the social and ecological places people actually inhabit" (p. 3). However, without

"challeng[ing] the assumptions, practices, and outcomes taken for granted in dominant culture and in conventional education" (Gruenewald, 2003, p. 3), such a place-based pedagogy leaves a void in the construction of knowledge. Gruenewald's (2003) response to this need for a comprehensive approach to place-based curriculum that both honors local traditions and challenges individuals to critique the political forces that impact local communities is a critical pedagogy of place.

Critical Pedagogy of Place

Gruenewald (2003) has recognized the pedagogical value of critical pedagogy, which offers a "transformational educational response to institutional and ideological domination" (p. 4), and place-based education, which puts the local place at the center of learning by connecting place with self and community in a multidisciplinary manner. However, he has felt that neither pedagogy provides a complete response to curricular reform, because challenging dominant culture and hegemony requires the recognition of ecological impacts on culture (Gruenewald, 2003). By combining critical pedagogy and place-based education into a critical pedagogy of place, Gruenewald (2003) has provided "a response against educational reform policies and practices that disregard places and that leave assumptions about the relationship between education and the political of economic development unexamined" (p. 3). Thus, the goal of such pedagogy becomes to recognize the geographical context of experience in order to admit "critical social and ecological concerns into one's understanding of place, and the role of places in education" (Gruenewald, 2003, p. 9).

Construction of the Theory

The two pedagogical traditions that comprise a critical pedagogy of place intersect where "place-based education's call for localized social action and critical pedagogy's recognition that experience, or Freire's (1970/1995) 'situationality,' has a geographical dimension" meet (Gruenewald, 2003, p. 9). Thus, an understanding of this composite pedagogy necessitates recognition of the characteristics and limitations of critical pedagogy and place-based education as well as the epistemologies that inform these traditions.

Critical pedagogy. Critical pedagogy stems from Marxist critical theory with a focus on examining issues of power and recognition that the personal is political (Gruenewald, 2003). Largely introduced by Freire and Giroux, critical pedagogy asserts that "educators and students should become 'transformative intellectuals' (Giroux, 1988), 'cultural workers' (Freire, 1998) capable of identifying and redressing the injustices, inequalities, and myths of an often oppressive world" (Gruenewald, 2003, p. 4). With a focus on decolonization (i.e., "unlearning much of what dominant culture and schooling teaches" (Hogg, 2007, p. 130)), critical pedagogy seeks to provide a space for learners to engage in Freire's (1972) concept of *conscientization*, or critical consciousness, in which individuals act on oppressive forces in their lives. A critical pedagogy of place recognizes the "places" in which this critical consciousness occurs (Gruenewald, 2003).

For Kincheloe and Pinar (1991), one of these "places" is the American South, with its unique culture and history and "fervor" (p. 9) for the valuing of place. While not recognized by Gruenewald (2003) as an aspect of the critical pedagogy that he has

described as a foundation for a critical pedagogy of place, Kincheloe and Pinar's (1991) curriculum theory of place as social psychoanalysis provides a clearer understanding of the intersection between critical pedagogy and a Southern epistemology that recognizes the influences of Southern history on the peoples of the region.

Social psychoanalysis. Kincheloe, Pinar, and Slattery (1994) have believed that incorporating a process of renewal into school curriculum in the South could improve the overall educational level of the region. In their estimation, "the major contemporary curriculum discourses—the political, the racial, the autobiographical, the theological, the aesthetic, the poststructural, the phenomenological, and the gender-focused—can all be linked in a curriculum theory of 'place'" (pp. 407-408), which requires "geographical rootedness" (p. 408) and attention to aspects of time and space. The belief that serves as the foundation for their theory is that "just as meaning cannot be separated from context and the knower cannot be separated from the known, so, too, does the process of understanding curriculum occur within the context of place" (p. 408). Pinar (1991) has found this curricular connection to place to be most critical in the South, where "the distinction between school knowledge and authentic academic knowledge is perhaps even more pronounced than it is in other regions of the country" and where curricular "linkages to everyday life are fragile and implicit" (p. 174). While the proposed curriculum theory of place focuses on the South as a distinct region geographically, socially, culturally, and psychologically, it also recognizes that there are "many Souths" (Kincheloe, Pinar, & Slattery, 1994, p. 408), which necessitates attention to local culture.

Cash (1941) has described the South in the following way:

> …it is easy to trace throughout the region (roughly delimited by the boundaries of the former Confederate States of America, but shading over into some of the border states, notably Kentucky, also) a fairly definite mental pattern, associated with a fairly definite social pattern—a complex of established relationships and habits of thought, sentiments, prejudices, standards and values, and association of ideas, which, if it is not common strictly to every group of white people in the South, is still common in one appreciable measure or another, and in some part or another, to all but relatively negotiable ones. (p. viii)

It is this mental, or cultural, pattern (rather than geographical boundary) that Beck, Frandsen, and Randall (2007) have considered distinctly Southern. Despite the impact of modernization, which continues to make the South resemble the North, Cash (1941) has asserted that one cannot conceive of a New South without recognizing the continuous influence of the Old South. Cash (1941) has stated the connection with the following metaphor:

> Nevertheless, the extent of the change and of the break between the Old South that was and the South of our time has been vastly exaggerated. The South, one might say, is a tree with many age rings, with its limbs and trunk bent and twisted by all the winds of the years, but with its tap root in the Old South. (p. x)

While Cash's characterization of a continuous Southern history has been debated due to its generalizations and focus on limited populations of Southern peoples (Reed, 1992), the influence of the time and place in which he lived and wrote (the N.C. Piedmont) certainly lends credence to any advocacy for place-based pedagogies.

For Kincheloe, Pinar, and Slattery (1994) the Southern distinction is both self-constructed and constructed by others, particularly the northern US, with both regions

viewing the South as unique in "manners (the fabled hospitality), pace, style of life, dialect, and other qualities that shape the texture of daily existence" (p. 415). Additionally, Kincheloe, Pinar, and Slattery (1994) have asserted that "racism, poverty, sexism, violence, religious fundamentalism, and the resulting impoverished capacity to think multidimentionally are distinctive features of the South" (p. 418). Likewise, the South also has been seen to have the following affirmative qualities:

> (1) a sense of closeness to the land and the rhythms of nature; (2) a profound appreciation of human relationships—family, friends—over time; (3) an especially intense appreciation of sport in noncommericialized, naïve, and even aesthetic, ways; (4) tendencies toward impulsivity and expressivity in speech, music, and literature rooted in place; (5) an allegiance to "lived time" and not clock minutes, respecting in almost nineteenth-century ways the rhythms of the body; (6) a love of storytelling so that experience can be comprehended narratively rather than via category; and (7) a historically experienced interracial intimacy that could form the basis for a profoundly integrated American character and identity. (Kincheloe, Pinar, & Slattery, 1994, p. 419)

In Kincheloe, Pinar, and Slattery's (1994) words, "What makes the South different is that it thinks it is and the North thinks it is too" (p. 415).

Because of this distinctly Southern culture, Kincheloe, Pinar, and Slattery (1994) have advocated for a Southern curriculum based on the concepts of social psychoanalysis, which seeks to assist individuals in becoming aware of "the hidden meanings and functions of symbolic expression" (p. 409), or the null curriculum, by "trac[ing] the interrelationships between ideology and the development of specific societies" (Kincheloe & Pinar, 1991, p. 2). According to Kincheloe, Pinar, and Slattery (1994), "the attempt to remedy these distortions" requires a parallel process of

"psychoanalysis and progressive social theory," with both recognizing the "necessity of self-understanding in the cultural and educational renewal of individuals, groups, and nations" (p. 409). Understanding the self in the present requires recognition of history, because the present "is infused with the past, it has meaning only in terms of it, and its complex nature results from the fusion of the two" (Kincheloe, Pinar, & Slattery, 1994, p. 409). Kincheloe and Pinar (1991) have suggested that the "epistemology of place" (p. 10) unique to the South involves an understanding of its history, sociology, and literature, which can provide specificity for often-generalized curriculum theory. However, this history can be convoluted by Southern mythology that blurs the lines between actual history and constructed discourse, leading to what Cash (1941) has called "fictions and false values" (p. 429).

While Kincheloe, Pinar, and Slattery (1994) have advocated for the respecting of the power of place, they caution against allowing this veneration of place to turn into mythology. Barthes (1972) has defined mythology as "depoliticized speech" (p. 143), or "discourse" (p. 109), in oral or symbolic form that "function[s]…to empty reality" (p. 143) by supplanting historical reality with a sense that something is natural. In During's (1999) reading of Barthes, he has summarized that "the way discourse (or 'mythology') is circulated through society makes a particular representation of the world seem natural and universal, so that an outside to it cannot be imagined except as 'unnatural,' 'perverse,' 'exotic,' 'abnormal,' 'stupid,' and so on" (p. 42). Such mythologizing, then, "abolishes the complexity of human acts…organiz[ing] a world which is without contradictions because it is without depth" (Barthes, 1972, p. 143).

In Kincheloe, Pinar, and Slattery's (1994) estimation, the mythologizing of the South has served to both "deproblematize social life" while "depict[ing] the power relations as problematic," which has resulted in a South of "contradictions: beset by defeat, shame, guilt, demoralization, destruction, decadence, and a need for self-justification in its own eyes and the eyes of the world, and yet confident, courageous, proud, defiant, decorous, repulsed by the evil of slavery, and committed to the enduring spirit of the wilderness" (p. 411). Therefore, confronting these contradictions in history and literature through critical analysis becomes necessary to engage in the process of renewal and social progress (Kincheloe & Pinar, 1991; Kincheloe, Pinar, & Slattery, 1994). Integrating "an authentic sense of self within southern culture" (Kincheloe, Pinar, & Slattery, 1994, p. 418), thus, becomes a goal of a curriculum theory of place.

As the South continues to become more urbanized and as the education system becomes more standardized, Kincheloe, Pinar, and Slattery (1994) have acknowledged the challenges faced by Southerners, who inhabit "multiple terrains in multiple time" (p. 421) as they experience change and progress while longing to retain their connection to their unique history. According to Kincheloe, Pinar, and Slattery (1994), "The 'new southerner' discovers what his or her northern (and European) counterpart has known for a hundred years: ennui and estrangement" (p. 421). Thus, a Southerner might cling to symbolism of Southern culture, such as a Confederate flag, in order to guard against a complete loss of regional identity (Kincheloe, Pinar, & Slattery, 1994). Examining the affirmative aspects of Southern culture as well as the distortions that mythologize its history, thus, requires curriculum that stems from "the lived reality of southerners"

(Kincheloe, Pinar, & Slattery, 1994, p. 424) and that builds a future out of a complete picture of the past, free from the "intolerable configuration of repressions, denials, and hope" (Kincheloe, Pinar, & Slattery, 1994, p. 427) that prevents transformation. According to Kincheloe, Pinar, and Slattery (1994), such a process of "recovering the past" (p. 428) requires that the region develop its own strategies for moving toward the future.

Critical constructivism. The focus on the ways in which the present is influenced by the past is a key characteristic of the epistemology of critical constructivism, which asserts that the self is "shaped by social action" ("the scars and traumas of the past," in particular) and "can be rethought and reshaped by social action" (Kincheloe, 2008, p. 82). According to Kincheloe (2008), critical constructivism involves the gained awareness of the ways in which one's "political opinions, religious beliefs, gender roles or racial perspectives have been shaped by dominant perspectives" (p. 81). Thus, the goal of pedagogy based on critical constructivism is to "expose the particular ways knowledge is produced and the impact it exerts on the production of self hood," with self being both "a social and historical construction" (Kincheloe, 2008, pp. 81-82). Specifically, Kincheloe (2008) has highlighted the following key ideas of critical constructivism:

- The world is socially constructed—what we know about the world always involves a knower and that which is to be known…
- All knowers are historical and social subjects…
- Not only is the world socially and historically constructed, but so are the people and the knowledge people possess…
- A key aspect of education in this context involves understanding the nature of these constructions…

- The teaching and learning process is intimately connected to the research act…
- When critical constructivists produce knowledge, they are not attempting to reduce variables but to maximize (Knoble, 1999) them…
- Thus, the purpose of education in this critical constructivist process is…engaging students in the knowledge production process…
- Critical constructivists are concerned with the exaggerated role power plays in these construction and validation processes…
- Critical constructivists reiterate the notion that knowledge is not a substance that can be deposited like money in a bank (Freire, 1970) and taken out when time for its use arrives…
- The knowledge of the classroom is constructed where students' personal experiences intersects with academic knowledges…
- In their search for ways to produce democratic and evocative knowledges, critical constructivists become detectives of new ways of seeing and constructing the world… (pp. 2-4)

While the recognition of multiple realities and social constructions of meaning is a quality shared by the epistemologies of both critical pedagogy and place-based education, critical constructivism could benefit from recognition that certain aspects of history might not need to be overcome but instead understood.

Theoretical limitations. Urban (1992) has been critical of the perspective that Southerners need to be emancipated from their past because of the implication that the region's history and culture are negative and because of the failure to recognize the complexity of both the political and cultural conservativism of the South and Southern religion. In Urban's (1992) estimation, this conservativism and religious focus have brought more than just problems to the region. Instead, these aspects of Southern culture have provided an alternative perspective to that which dominated "industrial America" (p. 437) as well as a means for coping with problems faced by the region. Urban (1992)

has suggested that a Southern curriculum should include "a more complex response to southern circumstances and events than resorting to seeing them mainly as a social and political pathology to be treated" (p. 437). Such an approach might better connect with the individuals of the region, who "do not want emancipation from the South" because "they regard the South as their home" (p. 439).

This perspective aligns with Arendt's idea of conservative pedagogy, which exposes students "to a representative sample of the many and varied ways in which the world is experienced and interpreted by its inhabitants past and present" (Levinson, 2001, p. 20) and avoids both endorsing the world in its current state and attempting to direct the course of its transformation (Levinson, 2001). Like Kincheloe and Pinar (1991), Arendt has focused on renewal, viewing "natality," or "the human capacity for renewal," as the "essence of education" (Levinson, 2001, p. 13). However, Levinson (2001) has suggested that Arendt's notion of renewal requires working with positionality and at the same time upholding individual uniqueness.

With this perspective of renewal, Urban (1992) has favored a more balanced approach, like that of Percy, who "manages to defend the South as much as he criticizes it" (p. 438). According to Urban (1992), Percy "notices its conservativism, pays homage to its religiosity without being taken in by it, acknowledges its agrarian roots, and defends its accomplishments in the areas of manners, morals, and family life, as well as in race relations, especially when compared to the North" (p. 438). Urban (1992) also has asserted that Percy recognizes the impact of increased "suburbanization and homogenization" (p. 438), which continues to create conflict for the region's individuals,

who seek progress while maintaining connection to the cultural distinctions of the region. Thus, Percy (1991) has chosen to live in a location (Covington, Louisiana, close to New Orleans) because he views it as a "nonplace in a certain relation to a place…a relation that allows one to avoid the horrors of total placement [i.e., in a location, like New Orleans, with a strong sense of place] or total nonplacement [i.e., leaving the South for a 'nondescript Northern place' (p. 4)] or total misplacement [i.e., moving to an exotic location]" (p. 3). For Percy (1991), finding a balance between connection to place and the ability to step back and reflect on its influence is essential to addressing the historical "ghosts" that shape the Southern experience while also appreciating the unique qualities of the region.

While Kincheloe, Pinar, and Slattery (1994) have attended to the cultural influences on meaning-making in the South, many of their assertions still lack attention to the intersecting cultural and ecological issues facing the rural communities in the increasingly urbanized region. Critical pedagogy, with its emphasis on social and urban contexts, often fails to attend to ecological and rural issues (Ching & Creed, 1997; Gruenewald, 2003). Gruenewald (2003) has found that even studies that recognize the significance of place tend to focus on urban spaces, and, even then, these studies lack analysis of the "interactions between cultures and ecosystems" (p. 5), privileging certain experiences over others. Attending to these interactions, Gruenewald (2003) has cited Bower's (2001) critical framework of *eco-justice* as providing the following focuses:

> (a) Understanding the relationships between ecological and cultural systems, specifically between the domination of nature and the domination of oppressed

> groups; (b) addressing environmental racism, including the geographical dimension of social injustices and environmental pollution; (c) revitalizing the non-commodified traditions of different racial and ethnic groups and communities, especially those traditions that support ecological sustainability; and (d) re-conceiving and adapting our lifestyles in ways that will not jeopardize the environment for future generations. (p. 6)

Because different peoples tend to prioritize issues of "urbanization, racism, classism, sexism, environmentalism, global economics, and other political themes" (Gruenewald, 2003, p. 6) differently, critical pedagogy can connect with place-based education in order for individuals to be "challenged to reflect on their own concrete situationality in a way that explores the complex interrelationships between cultural and economic environments" (Gruenewald, 2003, p. 6). Bringing together these two traditions requires attention to both decolonization and reinhabitation (Gruenewald, 2003).

Place-based education. While critical pedagogy focuses on decolonization, place-based education attends to reinhabitation, which Berg and Dassman (1990) have defined as "learning to live-in-place in an area that has been disrupted and injured through past exploitation" (p. 35). Encompassing "experiential learning, contextual learning, problem-based learning, constructivism, outdoor education, indigenous education, environmental and ecological education, bioregional education, democratic education, critical pedagogy itself, as well as other approaches that are concerned with context and the value of learning from and nurturing specific places, communities, or regions" (Gruenewald, 2003, p. 3), place-based education recognizes place as a "primary experiential or educational context" (Gruenewald, 2003, p. 7). Gruenewald (2003) has asserted that this is a radical idea, because "current educational discourses seek to

standardize the experience of students from diverse geographical and cultural places so that they may compete in the global economy" (p. 7).

Place-conscious education. According to Theobald (1997), this standardization influences cultural beliefs in ways that inform educational practices with false ideas:

> "Everyone knows," for instance, that people prefer to live in large cities because there's more to do there. "Everyone knows" that people naturally crave money and desire as much of it as they can get. "Everyone knows," too, that businesses must stay focused on the bottom line. And on and on it could go. Although these ideas are culturally popular, the record of human history suggests that they are patently false. (p. 2)

Therefore, "overcoming the power of these cultural beliefs" (Theobald, 1997, p. 2) for the renewal or restoration of community becomes a goal of curriculum. Theobald (1997) has argued that rural schools can serve this important role in the current educational climate and that "schools ought to attend more consciously to their physical place on earth and the social, political, and economic dynamics that surround it" (p. 1). Thus, place-conscious education encourages teachers and students to examine the needs of the local community and ingrain an ethic of care and civic responsibility into the classroom (Theobald, 1997).

Through focus on intradependence, place-conscious education "captures both human interdependence and our necessary relations to the natural world" (Brooke, 2003, p. 6) within a particular place. Brooke (2003), thus, has defined place-conscious education in the following way:

> Place-conscious education, thus, is schooling that focuses on the necessary relations—cultural, natural, agricultural—that shape a given place and its human communities. By centering education in local civic issues, history, biology, economics, literature, and so forth, learners will be guided to imagine the world as intradependent, filled with a variety of locally intradependent places, and to develop a richer sense of citizenship and civic action. (p. 6)

Such a perspective has shaped Theobald's (1997) view of curriculum as more than just "synonymous with information" (p. 138). Instead, curriculum should be contextualized in a place in order to "take what is artificial out of the schooling experience" (Theobald, 1997, p. 138). While acquiring information is part of the schooling process, Theobald (1997) has asserted that "unless this acquired information is used by students to construct understanding about the world as it currently exists for them, the time spent in acquisition will have been wasted" (p. 138).

Cultural constructivism. Such a conceptual understanding aligns with cultural constructivism, which suggests that individuals construct meaning in the context of culture (Hutchinson, 2006). According to Hutchinson (2006), "people from similar contextual backgrounds are more likely to have a congruence of meaning-making than those from dissimilar cultures" (p. 304). Thus, the challenge for educators is navigating diversity in international cultures as well as intra-national cultures (Hutchinson, 2006). For example, educators teaching in urban counties with significant numbers of students from rural backgrounds should understand and appreciate and should help students understand and appreciate the shared and diverse perspectives and meaning-making of students from both rural and urban contexts, while also attending to other differences such as race, gender, religion, socio-economic status, and so forth. According to Stewart

(1996), culture is a process and will, thus, be "tense, contradictory, dialectical, dialogic, texted, textured, both practical and imaginary, and in-filled with desire" (p. 5). Such a complex process also may result in diverse constructions of meaning that impact the ways that individuals view themselves and others. Thus, cultural constructivism may analyze the gaps in the cultural identifiers and performances that often are synonymous with examinations of specific individual and collective identities (Stewart, 1996). While sharing a perspective of socially-constructed knowledge and multiple realities with critical constructivism, cultural constructivism could value from attention to issues of power characteristic of critical constructivism.

Theoretical limitations. Despite the fact that, "like critical pedagogues, place-based educators advocate for a pedagogy that relates directly to student experience of the world, and that improves the quality of life for people and communities" (Gruenewald, 2003, p. 7), "not all place-based educators foreground the study of place as political praxis for social transformation" (Gruenewald, 2003, p. 7). Thus, if educators want students to truly connect self and place, then they need to "identify and confront the ways that power works through places to limit the possibilities for human and non-human others" (Gruenewald, 2003, p. 7). Additionally, "place-based education emphasizes ecological and rural contexts" (Gruenewald, 2003, p. 3), which limits attention to the "cultural conflicts inherent in dominant American culture" (Gruenewald, 2003, p. 4). By failing to "link ecological themes such as urbanization and the homogenization of culture under global capitalism" (Gruenewald, 2003, p. 4), place-based education allows for limited understanding of how knowledge is constructed.

According to Nespor (2008), place-based education risks reinforcing "standard dichotomies and moralizing definitions of place" (p. 482). By focusing on the separation between those who remain connected to place and those who are estranged from a sense of place due to capitalism, Nespor (2008) has asserted that "we end up defining cultural identity and differentiating groups according to what we judge to be their distance from the ideal" (p. 482). This focus can lead one to ignore issues of "racism, classism, ableism, and gender-based discrimination" (Nespor, 2008, p. 484) in examinations of culture and curriculum development. Thus, addressing the limitations of both place-based education and critical pedagogy becomes the goal of a critical pedagogy of place.

Application of the Theory

Gruenewald (2003) has emphasized that a critical pedagogy of place consciously blends critical pedagogy and place-based education into a combined approach in order to strengthen both traditions and address the limitations of each. By attending to both oppression and "the responsibility to conserve and restore our shared environments" (Gruenewald, 2003, p. 6), "a critical pedagogy of place aims to evaluate the appropriateness of our relationships to each other, and to our *socio-ecological* places" and "encourages teachers and students to reinhabit their places…to pursue the kind of social action that improves the social and ecological life of places" (Gruenewald, 2003, p. 7). Combining the social focus of critical pedagogy with the ecological focus of place-based education may allow for a building of empathy for the human and ecological condition that can "contribute to the production of educational discourses and practices that explicitly examine the place-specific nexus between environment, culture, and

education" (Gruenewald, 2003, p. 10). Additionally, blending critical pedagogy, which is "usually focused on urban contexts, despite its Freirean influence" (Hogg, 2007, p. 21), with the often rural-centric place-based education provides a space for examining rural culture within urban areas, which has not yet been attempted despite the fact that this type of geographical landscape is common in many parts of the South. Scrutinizing this interplay of social politics, ecological and human relationships, and regional history and culture necessitates examination of the concepts of transformation and conservation (Gruenewald, 2003).

While transformation is a goal of critical pedagogy, Gruenewald (2003) has asserted that critical reflection on conservation also must be included in a pedagogy that attends to both human and ecological contexts. Such an approach problematizes the conflicts often present between liberals and conservatives by "challenging everyone…to specifically name those aspects of cultural, ecological, and community life that should be conserved, renewed, or revitalized" (Gruenewald, 2003, p. 10). This type of critical reflection might lead to the type of empathy that can result in a balance between social and ecological transformation and conservation. Gruenewald (2003) has asserted:

> The critical synthesis posed by a critical pedagogy of place posits that the questions of what needs to be transformed and what needs to be conserved are equally critical and necessary, that cultural and ecological contexts are always two parts of the same whole, that decolonization and reinhabitation are mutually supportive objectives, that outrage toward injustice must be balanced with renewing relationships of care for others—human and non-human—and that the shared experience of everyday places promotes the critical dialogue and reflection that is essential to identifying and creating community well-being. (p. 10)

Providing this space for examination of transformation and conservation requires a curriculum focused on place and that acknowledges politics in the classroom as a microcosm of society (Gruenewald, 2003). Recognizing these political forces necessitates holistic analysis of the past, including attention to past regional indiscretions in the tradition of social psychoanalysis. However, because the South has been a region of exploitation (Berg & Dassman, 1990; Stewart, 1996), leading to a great sense of distrust, occasions for an Arendtian sense of renewal might be initiated by the *students* after being presented with opportunities to see the world "as it is" (Levinson, 2001, p. 19). By conserving the world as it is, students can learn to navigate the contention that arises when knowledge is produced in different versions, ferretting out information without being told which perspective to choose (Curtis, 2001). Doing so requires both an understanding of self/identify while also attending to a sense of community as suggested by Theobald (1997). This might entail "'unhiding' the ways people in different locations are linked by translocal (indeed, global) 'natural-resource commons' (for example, water, air), 'social commons' (such as education), 'intellectual and cultural commons' (ideas, arts, and the like), and 'species commons' (gene sequences, bodies)" (Nespor, 2008, p. 488). Such an approach to individual and collective awareness-building also necessitates that teachers and students "experience and interrogate the places outside of school—as part of the school curriculum—that are the local context of shared cultural politics" (Gruenewald, 2003, p. 9).

Researcher Positionality

My own interrogation of the impact that the "local context of shared cultural politics" had on the teaching and learning process of the rural students in the urban county where I taught serves as my personal validation for framing this study within a critical pedagogy of place (to be narrowed later to a critical rurban pedagogy). For purposes of transparency, I believe that it is important to disclose the fact that my interest in hearing the stories of educational stakeholders in urban counties with significant rural populations in order to inform the co-construction of curriculum that is culturally relevant for rural students stems from several factors. First, I taught in one of these counties and noticed that my urban-centric teacher education program failed to prepare me for work with the rural population. This realization then led to an awareness that my experience growing up in a rural coastal community differed greatly from the rural experience of individuals in Central NC, which also differed from the rural experience in the N.C. Mountains. Finally, this recognition and my subsequent attention to issues of power and the valuing of urban over rural shape my interest in this topic and also how I approach my research.

During my work in this type of county, I noticed that my training, which focused on attending to ethnic and racial diversity, was needed but incomplete for my work with rural students. Racial issues existed, and my training, which focused on multicultural education, provided me with insights that were transferable to various situations; however, I had never once learned anything about working with rural students and families and how my approaches may need to differ from those I used with individuals

from urban areas. Economic disparity was present among both the urban and rural populations but seemed to be one of the key diversity issues with the rural students and families. Additionally, many of them felt (based on informal conversation) disenfranchised by a system that seemed to attend to the concerns of the urban center over the values of those who lived outside the city limits.

Experiencing this growing awareness led to self-reflection and conversations with others, who had grown up in this particular area, which used to be primarily rural but has grown in population and economic development due to the proximity to several universities and business parks. Through these conversations, I began to see how my experience growing up in rural Eastern NC differed from others' experiences growing up in rural Central NC. Where I grew up in rural Eastern NC, many individuals—even those with financial wealth—felt somewhat disenfranchised, because the needs of those in the center of the state (closest to the capital) seemed to be met ahead of the needs of those of us on the "outside." However, being close to the water, we felt wealthy in terms of location and sense of community, so, collectively, we lived a rather complacent existence. The experiences of those I spoke with in rural Central NC differed in that some members of the community felt disenfranchised while others seemed to favor shifting organizational and governance systems that valued certain perspectives (mostly those of the "educated" elite) over others. These discrepancies were often front-and-center, and the individuals in the region had much experience with "outsiders" coming in to tell the locals how their community could be improved. From these conversations, I held the

perspective that being “left alone” as we were at the coast seemed like it may have been a blessing in many ways.

Gaining this recognition has been a process that has only intensified with my participation in a graduate program with a focus on social justice. I cannot help but recognize issues of power in the interactions and structures that govern the actions of individuals in these rural areas. More and more, I see how little the stories of individuals from rural communities are heard, especially in areas with an urban core, making the area more susceptible to valuing the ideas of those in the urban center. According to Bettez (in press), my goals and values are influenced by my positionality; therefore, hearing the stories of these individuals seems to me to be a necessity in order to even begin to have conversations in schools and universities about making sure that curricula are culturally relevant for local students. However, while individuals might acknowledge the impact of place on their lived experiences, they may or may not be aware of the historical and socio-political origins and incarnations of the rural-urban distinction that may influence their enactments and perceptions of their own identified cultures as well as those of others. Thus, defining this distinction becomes important in setting the groundwork for the construction of meaning within the local context.

CHAPTER III

RURAL-URBAN DISTINCTION

According to Fan and Chen (1998), definitions of "rural" and "urban" tend to lack consistency, which can create challenges for disaggregating data based on rural and urban contexts. Generally, and specifically within North Carolina's education system (R. Muhammad, personal communication, October 25, 2011), "rural" is defined as part of an urban-centric classification system based on the U.S. Census criteria for defining *urbanicity* (i.e., classification as or proximity to a *principal city*, *urbanized area*, or *urban cluster*; Provasnik et al., 2007). Yet, this type of distinction between rural and urban used by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES; n.d.) and subsequently adopted by the N.C. Department of Public Instruction (R. Muhammad, personal communication, October 25, 2011) fails to address the sociological distinctions between these settings, which provide necessary context for cultural studies in these areas.

Thus, in developing an educational study that attends to rural culture within an urban county, a rural-urban distinction based on sociological, political, and regional indicators needs to be defined. While many educational studies on either rural or urban contexts utilize physical (based on U.S. Census data) definitions of "rural" and "urban," regional indicators of these locales vary greatly from state to state and region to region (Casey, 1998; Sim, 1988; Vernon-Feagans, Gallagher, & Kainz, 2010). Therefore,

informing this study, first, requires an understanding of "the urban-rural debate [which] has long been addressed in sociology" (Bonner, 1998, p. 166).

According to Creed and Ching (1997), "the rural/urban distinction underlies many of the power relations that shape the experiences of people in nearly every culture" (p. 2); yet, attention to this distinction in the study of identity politics has been lacking. Despite the changes in society that have led to increased migration and interrelations between rural and urban, Creed and Ching (1997) have contended that "many cultural activities [still] operate to keep people in their places" (p. 2). In fact, even in "areas where town and country seem nearly indistinguishable," such as urban counties with significant rural populations, "inhabitants…may elaborate a difference through extensive cultural discourse" (Creed & Ching, 1997, p. 2). On the other hand, where differences are distinct, the rural-urban discourse may focus on differences at the neglect of commonalities (Creed & Ching, 1997).

For Creed and Ching (1997), the fact that rural has been viewed as the marginalized cultural Other "reveals the cultural hierarchies that make place such a politically and personally charged category" of identity (p. 4). Better understanding the appearance of these cultural hierarchies in sociology and identity politics requires examination of the theoretical origins of the rural-urban distinction as well as the current constructions of "urban" society.

Theoretical Origins

According to Bonner (1998), the need for a rural-urban distinction is challenged by some sociologists because of the societal changes that have occurred since this

distinction was a critical issue in the nineteenth century. However, Bonner (1998) has argued that space for this distinction still exists, though it requires reexamination. In order to reconceptualize this distinction for the modern society, it is useful to understand the evolution of the theoretical distinction between rural and urban. With the rise of the Industrial Revolution came the rise of urban studies as a field of study, because up until that time, "the city was taken by most social thinkers to be the image of society itself, and not some special unique form of social life" (Sennett, 1969, p. 3), and the country "was synonymous with nature" (Bonner, 1998, p. 167). As cities grew during this time, so, too, did the recognition of a complex rural-urban distinction as more than just about a society-nature distinction or about physical location (Castells, 1977). With this change in perspective, two classical schools of thought emerged as the totality of city culture was examined: the German School (included the work of Marx, Tonnies, Weber, and Simmel) and the Chicago School (including the work of Park, Redfield, and Wirth; Sennett, 1969).

The German School

Marx and Engels. Marx and Engels were two of the earliest sociologists to examine differences between the country and city (Bonner, 1998). Summarizing Marx and Engels, Bonner (1998) has stated, "rural life is not an other to the mode of production of capitalism but rather an early stage in its development" (Bonner, 1998, p. 169). For Marx and Engels (1970), this early stage involved a rural relationship between individuals and nature with no consciousness of the potential of productivity. Thus, rural individuals have been viewed as subservient to nature and to one another (in reference to

the feudal system that "started out from the *country*" (Marx & Engels, 1970, p. 45); Bonner, 1998). Bonner has concluded the following:

> From this perspective, the ideology of family, community, and tradition associated with rurality is mere "sentimental veil" that bound the majority of people, particularly women and children, to a subordinate, impoverished life, and encouraged a "slothful indolence." By virtue of its ideological antipathy to the novel possibilities in human action, rural life therefore is antipathetic to the resources that the new, who in any sociality are the young, could bring to the community…Rural life, and the feudal society it nurtured, according to Marx and Engels, came to stand for a social organization which was explicitly organized around excluding an openness to the possibilities of human action. (p. 170)

Thus, Marx and Engels (1970) viewed development (in the form of urban society) as liberation from this subordination and the "antagonism between town and country" as the result of the "transition from barbarism to civilization, from tribe to State, from loyalty to nation" that has continued to occur since the beginning of civilization (p. 69). Bonner (1998) has suggested that this conceptualization of rurality "connotes an image of regressiveness, going back in time/development/capacities, an image which is still part of the meaning associated with rurality" (p. 171) as well as an image of "blindness or an indifference to individual and collective responsibility" (p. 172).

Tonnies. Unlike Marx and Engels, Tonnies approached the rural-urban distinction not in terms of development, with rural being a stage to overcome, but as two "opposed social systems based on sharply opposing ways of life" (Bonner, 1998, p. 173). With a rural upbringing, Tonnies (1960) viewed "the country, the village, and the town, by virtue of the primacy given to family and history" (Bonner, 1998, p. 173) as sites of cooperation and harmony; whereas, the city was seen as a place of competition and individualism. In

Tonnies's perspective, rural settings nurture a social organization built around the family in which a balance of community and nature exist (Bonner, 1998). On the other hand, urban settings have been viewed as encompassing the "dark side of modernity" in which relationships "are governed by the rational means-end attitude" (Bonner, 1998, p. 174). Thus, rural begins to be viewed as an Other to modernity that reinforces community "because of its focus on establishing and nurturing common bonds" (Bonner, 1998, p. 175).

Weber. With this idealistic view of rural life, Tonnies reinforced a sense of competition for which he had criticized urban life. In contrast, Weber (1946) postulated that "a rural society separate from the urban social community does not exist at the present time in a great part of the modern civilized world" (p. 363). For Weber, differences between the European and American rural experiences have demonstrated a need to view the rural-urban discourse "within the context of modernity" (Bonner, 1998, p. 181). With some workers in rural America appearing as entrepreneurial as workers in urban society, Weber contended that the rural-urban distinction is only relevant in so much as it enables a "capacity to socialize a unique character and community" (Bonner, 1998, p. 180). Thus, if rural life does not provide an alternative to modernity, or capitalism, then Weber might suggest that there is no need for a rural-urban distinction.

The issue of not having an alternative to challenge modern urban society has been seen by Weber as being problematic because of his view that cities of the past positively and creatively influenced individuals' lives unlike cities of his time (Sennett, 1969). Unlike Marx and Engels, who viewed the city in terms of its historical development,

Weber described the potential of the city as "a set of social structures that encourage social individuality and innovation," thus being "the instrument of historical change" (Sennett, 1969, p. 6). Yet, Weber has suggested that modern cities have not lived up to their cultural potential, instead being "primitive and undeveloped institutions" (Sennett, 1969, p. 7).

Simmel. Sharing Weber's view that modern urban society has failed to live up to its potential, Simmel associated "the impersonality, the faceless bureaucracies, the rational market processes" more with the "social-psychological" process of dealing with the complexities of urban life than with Weber's structural complexities (Sennett, 1969, p. 9). For Simmel, city crowding might be overwhelming to urban dwellers if not for defensive attempts to act "in a nonemotional, reasoned, functional relationship" to others (Sennett, 1969, pp. 8-9). Yet, unlike in rural settings where individuals are more likely to have emotional connections to one another, Simmel viewed the defensive processes occurring in the city as having potential for psychological freedom, because such emotionless interactions, or daily routines, might lead individuals to look inward to "understand that 'who I am' is not simply 'what I do ordinarily'" (Sennett, 1969, p. 10). Unlike Tonnies, Simmel viewed the familial community of the rural setting as one that limits "the freedom to develop individuality of its members" (Bonner, 1997, p. 28). According to Bonner (1997), this tension "between the space the metropolis creates for 'individuality' and the 'de-individualizing tendency' of the small town" (p. 29) continues to raise questions for modern rural and urban sociologists.

The Chicago School

Park. Influenced by the lectures of Simmel during his studies in Germany, Park brought a new understanding of rural and urban spaces (urban in particular) as both "place" and "moral order" (Sennett, 1969, p. 13) to the Chicago School. Looking at the ecological influences of the city on the "emotional, human experience" of urbanites (Sennett, 1969, p. 13), Park expanded Simmel's transcendental notion of freedom to one more behavioral in nature. For Park, the urban space, physically organized as a "concrete expression of the division of labor and the fragmenting of social roles" (Sennett, 1969, p. 14), could provide the medium through which individuals could become innovative, freeing themselves from the societal standards that encourage conformity and, thus, changing the cities themselves (Harvey, 2008). As Sennett (1969) has summarized, "Where Park's free urban man is an innovator, a deviant, Simmel's free urban man is more like a monk" (p. 16).

Redfield. Building on Park's and, later, Wirth's works on urban society, Redfield was able to combine some of the urban analysis of the early Chicago School with the works on societal development introduced by the German School (Sennett, 1969). According to Sennett (1969), Redfield's work shows how the early Chicago School theorists' "views of the modern city were based on assumptions about the lives of nonurban, or what Redfield called 'folk,' societies" (p. 17). By viewing rural and urban as opposites, Redfield developed a two-part process of urbanization (from rural/folk to urban) in which one becomes "structural[ly] absorb[ed] into the city" and then experiences "an internal change of attitude in the mind of the new urbanite" (Sennett,

1969, p. 17). At the same time that one undergoes a process of cultural change from rural to urban as part of a fixed character of the city, the city also may "change its [functional] form as the culture in which it exist[s] change[s]" (Sennett, 1969, p. 18). In other words, urbanism as a theory might be defined as one in which modern societies have a distinct culture derivative of a transition from rural to urban and in which this process of change stems from the city as a particular locale (Castells, 1976). In Sennett's (1969) estimation, Redfield's theory has shown how the city could evolve "without losing [its] marks" as "a special kind of society" and become an "agent of social change" (p. 18). Thus, Sennett (1969) has suggested the following:

> If this idea is joined to Park's notion of how innovators within the city are free, there emerges a comprehensive portrait of the means by which the people in a city have a definite character and yet a real freedom, just as their city has an identifiable structure and yet the capacity to change. (p. 19)

According to Redfield and Singer (1969), a cultural integration between country and city exists in the urbanization process; yet, "a basic common cultural consciousness or a common culture" remains elusive (p. 227).

Wirth. For Wirth (1969), this elusiveness necessitated a reexamination of the meanings of rural and urban. As a disciple of Park, Wirth (1969) built on Park's urban sociology to explore how the urban division of labor might influence the urban economy, politics, and land use (Sennett, 1969). However, returning to his earlier work, Wirth (1969) noted that his theories on urban society were based on the assumption that rural

culture stands in comparison to that of urban culture. According to Wirth, the need to revisit the rural-urban distinction is due to the following:

> The city has spilled over into the countryside. City ways of life have in some respects taken on a rural cast, particularly in the suburbs. On the other hand, industry, which hitherto was characteristic of cities, has gone into the countryside. Transportation has made the city accessible to rural people. The radio and, more lately, television promise to produce a virtual revolution. (p. 165)

In Wirth's (1969) mind, this societal shift necessitates a move away from a dichotomy in which rural and urban sociologies are attempted separately. Instead, Wirth (1969) suggested that rural and urban "mode[s] of life and state[s] of mind" (p. 168) might be examined as cultures that may traverse settlements.

Finding this cultural space between rural and urban might be especially important in any study examining rural culture within urban areas. For Bonner (1997), this requires cutting through the hegemony of the scientific approaches to the rural-urban discourse of the preceding centuries. However, with rural typically defined as that which is not urban, understanding rural culture in the context of the people who identify rural as part of their cultural identity, first, necessitates an understanding of the possible contemporary meanings of urban and the characteristics that are sometimes used to delineate between urban and rural culture in current research.

Modern Distinction

Urban. The U.S. Census Bureau (2011) defines an urban area as a core census tract/block that encompasses at least 2,500 people, 1,500 of which reside outside of institutional group living quarters. In 2006, the NCES released a new classification

system for the major locale categories of the Census (Provasnik et al., 2007). In this new classification, the four major locale categories of the Census—city, suburban, town, and rural—are subdivided into the categories of small, midsize, and large. According to Provasnik et al. (2007), the categories are developed around concepts to define an area's "urbanicity" (p. 2), or distance from a "geographical area that is densely populated in comparison to areas around" (Foster, 2007, p. 771): *principal city* (i.e., "a city that contains the primary population and economic center of a metropolitan statistical area" (p. 2)), *urbanized areas* (i.e., densely settled core "areas with populations of 50,000 or more" (p. 2)), and *urban clusters* (i.e., core areas "with populations between 25,000 and 50,000" (p. 2)). For example, the Charlotte-Concord-Rock Hill Metropolitan Statistical Area is the largest urban area in NC, with 1,330,448 people as of the 2000 U.S. Census (Lake Norman Region Economic Development Center, n.d.). The city of Charlotte is the largest principal city of this urban area, and Concord is the largest suburb of this urban area. According to Gaztambide-Fernández (2011), such a classification allows social scientists to analyze the resource distributions, the physical conditions, the spatial arrangements, and the racial distributions of particular spaces in order to better understand "two crucial characteristics of the urban: proximity and inequality" (p. 18).

Urban spaces might consist of areas of high population density; however, this proximity within urban spaces may vary greatly as "some people live in small and poorly maintained apartments" while "other people live in spacious and luxurious apartments or houses" (Gaztambide-Fernández, 2011, p. 19). For Millington (2011), "some spaces [in capitalist society] are valued more highly than others," often based on "their relation to

the centre" (p. 8). According to Schultz (1989), cities themselves are "planned environments" that are the "results of cultural decisions about the most appropriate physical uses of land and the residential distribution of people" (p. xiii). Thus, the inequalities apparent in this structural hierarchy define cities in a materialist sense but fail to account for the "meanings associated with the idea of the urban" (Gaztambide-Fernández, 2011, p. 19) and the cultural and historical images that influence these urban meanings (Haymes, 1995).

Cooper and Sundeen (1979) have understood these urban meanings as (1) social structure, (2) physical place, (3) political system, (4) economic system, or (5) phenomenology. Focusing on a phenomenological representation of urban, Cooper and Sundeen (1979) have gravitated toward an understanding of "'urban' as a form of experience" (p. 487) that is "great in volume, relatively dense, and relatively heterogeneous" (p. 489) and that transcends city limits. While the term "urban" is often used synonymously with mythological and often-pathologizing constructions of race (specifically, the Black race by the dominant White culture; Anyon, 1997; Haymes, 1995; Kelley, 1997; Massy & Denton, 1993), Leonardo and Hunter (2007) have acknowledged that there are differences in connotations of urban meaning, from that which "represents an outlet for entertainment and a venue for a sophisticated life" to "an inescapable cul-de-sac of poverty and daily degradation" (p. 779).

For Leonardo and Hunter (2007), the urban is both real and imagined. They have contended that the "urban is real insofar as it is demarcated by zones, neighborhoods, and policies" (Leonardo & Hunter, 2007, p. 779) as a means to regulate the many economic

activities of the locale for the purposes of "stability and prosperity" (Sirjamaki, 1964, p. 5). "However, it is imagined to the extent that it is replete with meaning, much of which contains contradictions as to exactly what the urban signifies" (Leonardo & Hunter, 2007, p. 779). In other words, the urban is a "dialectical example of the process of modernization" in which, "in light of power relations, urban may signify the hallmark of civilization and the advances it offers, or a burden and problem of progress" (Leonardo & Hunter, 2007, p. 779).

According to Foster (2007), the terms "urban" and "urbane" entered the lexicon during the seventeenth century, carrying with it a positive connotation. However, by the early twentieth century, Foster (2007) has found that the terms began to take on a more negative connotation focused on the inner-city, which was defined by social and economic problems more than spatial location. Foster (2007) has speculated that the influx of immigrants and African-American migrants into the cities may have led to these shifting connotations.

This imagined urban, with both its positive and negative connotations, is most significant to Leonardo and Hunter (2007) in educational contexts "because it socially and culturally constructs the people who live in it as well as their needs" (p. 780). In their estimation, the result has been a construction of urban as "a sophisticated space, an authentic place of identity, and a disorganized 'jungle'" (Leonardo & Hunter, 2007, p. 780). In Sim's (1988) assessment, one of the positive urban mythologies is that the city offers "amenities and stimulation" as well as "economic inducements" (p. 24). According to Gaztambide-Fernández (2011), the "mostly white and financially stable" sophisticated

urban space is "imagined positively through the notion of the *urbane*—the center of civilization, cultural refinement, and progress" (p. 19), which is in contrast to the negative city mythology (Sim, 1988) of the "urban jungle," or ghetto consisting of people of color or immigrants, characterized as a "pathological place marked by a profound disorganization, criminal character, and moral malaise" (Leonardo & Hunter, 2007, p. 780). In the racist image of the "urban jungle," the "culture of poverty" is seen as one of "control" in which the "people living [in the ghettos] are pathological and culturally deviant from the mainstream" (Leonardo & Hunter, 2007, p. 789). Some researchers have suggested that an "underclass culture" exists in urban areas that "encourages laziness, joblessness (read: welfare dependence), victimhood, lack of personal responsibility (thus the Welfare Reform Act), instant gratification (read: illegal activities), irresponsibly sexual behavior, and a lack of family values" (Leonardo & Hunter, 2007, p. 789). Thus, the notion of culture can be used as a "powerful means of controlling cities" (Zukin, 2004, p. 86). Such deficit-based perceptions can lead policymakers to see spending on urban education as wasteful (Foster, 2007; Leonardo & Hunter, 2007), which can disadvantage students of these schools who may end up in the decreasingly in-demand low-skill jobs (Jargowsky, 1997). Thus, the focus on an "underclass culture" keeps "the role of wealth and economic inequality in the production of poverty" invisible (Gaztambide-Fernández, 2011, p. 21).

Just as urban spaces are politically racialized and economically stratified, Leonardo and Hunter (2007) also have contended that urban spaces are gendered spaces. According to Leonardo and Hunter (2007), the "urban jungle" is feminized when

"pundits talk about teenage parenthood, welfare dependence, and the out of control sexuality of women of color" and masculinized when talking about "gangs, violence, and the drug economy" (p. 792). In schools, this gendered view of urban spaces can impact individuals' perceptions of urban boys and girls, who may be viewed as violent or over-sexualized, respectively (Leonardo & Hunter, 2007). Additionally, these images have been commodified, which means that "urban identity can be performed or 'tried on' by White students or middle class people" (Leonardo & Hunter, 2007, p. 794). Essentially, in Leonardo and Hunter's (2007) estimation, "They can dabble in the 'urban' without ever losing their access to suburban space and White privilege" and without ever "communing with its people" (p. 794).

Somewhere in between these imagined notions of urban as sophisticated space or jungle is an authentic place of identity, which may have both positive and negative connotations. For Leonardo and Hunter (2007), urban spaces can provide a counter-narrative to images of the "dirty, violent ghettos," instead recognizing urban communities, especially for people of color, as "a home of authentic cultural practices" (p. 785). However, the problem with this notion of authenticity is it perpetuates the idea that "urban spaces [are] more authentically 'ethnic' or 'racial' than suburban or rural spaces" (Leonardo & Hunter, 2007, p. 787), which fails to align with the experiences of many people of color (Gaztambide-Fernández, 2011). For example, "by conceiving black urban culture in the singular, interpreters unwittingly reduce their subjects to cardboard typologies who fit neatly into their own definition of the 'underclass' and render invisible a wide array of complex cultural forms and practices" (Kelley, 1997, p. 17). Thus, in

considering the influence of these images in popular culture on rural communities, a Black individual's experience in a rural setting might be viewed as less "real" than the experience of a Black individual in an urban setting (Leonardo & Hunter, 2007). Therefore, in addition to serving as the primary locale from which all other locales are compared, urban also may be used to designate the dominant culture (economic, political, and social) of the US (Alexander, 2010; Schramm-Pate, 2002; Theobald & Wood, 2010). In this study, urban will serve as the dominant indicator by which rural is compared.

Rural. One of the key challenges in understanding the experiences of rural individuals is defining what "rural" means. Because of this challenge, Vernon-Feagans, Gallagher, and Kainz (2010) have tried to define rural in both quantitative and qualitative ways. Based on identifiers used by the U.S. Census Bureau and the U.S. Department of Education, Vernon-Feagans et al. (2010) have defined the quantitative identifiers of "rural" as capturing the "areas of the country outside of large urban areas and their suburbs" and that "generally include only areas/counties that have towns with fewer than 50,000 people, in addition to being located far from urban/suburban areas" (p. 164).

However, Vernon-Feagans et al. (2010) have noted that the quantitative definition used by various federal departments fails to account for some of the socio-political, economic, educational, and cultural factors that help to define the rural experience. Thus, the qualitative identifiers of "rural" may include the following characteristics:

> (1) They are located in a small town or village at a distance from a large urban area and in an environment that has historical roots in an agrarian culture; (2) such areas have access to fewer resources than larger urban or suburban areas because of distance to resources and higher poverty rates; (3) smaller communities may

> have smaller community based schools, although there are trends toward large consolidated schools; (4) schools in rural communities may be ready to meet community needs through cooperation with other sectors of the local economy…but with a need for children to attend school; and (5) rural schools are grounded in a "sense of place" and are rooted in the lives of the families whose children attend them. (p. 164)

Friedland (2002) also has suggested that any definition of rural should account for ecological (population density), occupational (agriculture, which has become the more industrialized "agribusiness" (p. 352)), and cultural (values and norms) variables.

Brown and Schafft (2011) have noted that "the category of 'rural' masks an incredible amount of diversity with regard to community identity, cultural and historical legacies, economic structure, demographics, land-use patterns, and settlement structures" (p. 64). According to Sim (1988), the cultural mixing often clustered in certain neighborhoods of urban areas is found throughout rural spaces. For example, in urban areas, "when strangers from different backgrounds meet…there is contact but it is filtered, insulated, and restrained except in rare moments of crisis or celebration" (Sim, 1988, p. 94). On the other hand, in rural areas, "there is more space, greater visibility, less structure, more face-to-face contact," which may lead to a greater "opportunity for individual participation in these smaller units of action" (Sim, 1988, p. 94). However, this cultural diversity and the diversity of rural locales may present difficulty in defining rural areas based on a general sense of place. According to Casey (1998):

> Depending on what part of the country we live in, the word rural could bring to mind images of flat lands or rolling hills; corn or wheat fields; acres lined with fruit trees, vegetables, cotton, or tobacco. Our mountains may range from dense forest to barren rock, to snow and ice, or to massive ascents of red clay,

> shimmering in the haze of an unforgiving sun. And though generally we are slower to think of our oceans and waterways as rural places, they too, possess qualities of wilderness unique to marsh lands and to certain coastal areas. (p. 15)

In Sim's (1988) estimation, there are four different types of rural communities, with different weight of emphasis placed on land, relationship to urban centers, "scenic amenities," and "unrealized ambitions" (p. 62). Sim (1988) has described these "pure" types of rural communities (with most communities being a unique blend of each) in the following way:

> (a) *Agraville* represents a community based on a rich, productive land resource – mining, forestry, fishing, or agriculture. The emphasis here will be on agriculture.
> (b) *Fairview* represents a community that has important scenic values which make it attractive to new arrivals in contrast to its long-time residents whose attachment will have less to do with beauty than with economic and social conditions.
> (c) *Ribbonville* represents a community that is dominated by one or more large cities or towns. It still retains much open country around it, and it in turn is surrounded by a range of smaller settlements.
> (d) *Mighthavebeenville* represents a place dominated by unrealized hopes for growth and greatness that seem to burden all small places. (p. 62)

This diversity of rural place also is present in NC, where the rural locales of the Coastal Plain, Piedmont, and Mountain regions vary greatly in terrain and demographics. Yet, while a single definition of rural may not exist based on topography or population, land seems to be the "spatial basis of rural identity" (Casey, 1998, p. 18), which also serves to ground social relationships within an area. However, according to Casey (1998), "Such reciprocity between community and land is possible…only when a long-term investment has been made by a particular community in a particular place," with

membership in the community "determined by the length of time a family or individual has lived there" (p. 19).

This recognition of the view of long-established connections to a place as a critical piece of rural identity also provides insight into the conflicts that can be present between rural locals and second-homeowners in rural areas. While the influx of second homes in rural areas can benefit the local economy—especially as many rural residents have to commute to urban areas for work, impacting the rural tax base (Hatfield, 2002)—second-homeownership also reshuffles positions of power within the local community, which can deplete the social capital of the locals and change the ways that locals interact within the community (Rye, 2011). Due to changing positionality in which some benefit by the presence of the second-homeowners while others do not, the influx of "outsiders" can change the social fabric of the rural community, negatively impacting the experience of both the locals and the second-homeowners (Rye, 2011). According to Smith and Krannich (2000), this is because "newcomers of urban origin bring a particular sociocultural identity to the rural communities to which they migrate," and "this identity and the associated value orientations differ significantly from those held by longer-term residents" (p. 399).

Additionally, the image of what constitutes "rural" for these urban outsiders is often based on stereotypes and romanticized notions of "rurality." In fact, the image of *who* makes up the rural population often is misrepresented to be farmers even though most of the people living in rural locales neither work on nor live on farms (Casey, 1998). Instead of utilizing a definition that accounts for diverse factors, the definition most often

used to describe "rural" is the U.S. Census Bureau's definition based on population density (less than 250 people per square mile) and proximity to urban areas, which focuses more on what "rural" is not (i.e., "urban") than what it is (Casey, 1998). According to the new classification system released by the NCES in 2006, rural areas are designated as those that "do not lie inside an urbanized area or urban cluster" (Provasnik et al., 2007, p. 3). This urban-centric definition of rural, therefore, ignores the characteristics of the people of rural locales, including their values, customs, and lifestyles (Casey, 1998). Additionally, this definition of rural as "not urban" recognizes areas with lower population densities as less significant (Sher, 1988). According to Casey (1998), "rural is not just a place, it is the context—it is *who* they are" (p. 17).

Defining *who* one is cannot be accomplished without knowing one's history. This history is more than just a place in time; instead, it is context that is the social and symbolic basis of rural identity (Casey, 1998). With *community* as context, in more of a psychological than physical sense, it is important to recognize the "collective body of individuals who contribute to and rely on the whole for their sense of identity—of *who* they are" (Casey, 1998, p. 18). Often in rural communities, the family, church, and school are the central collective bodies that help support and promote a sense of belonging and rural identity, with the school seemingly having the greatest potential impact on revitalizing rural life (Casey, 1998). However, Sim (1988) has argued that the collective fabric of rural communities is at risk due to the increased use of rural land for "urban demands" and the fact that individuals' social activities concentrate on "personal preference…over communal responsibility" (p. 28). Yet, Sim (1988) has seen an

opportunity to hold onto a collective cultural identity based around the traditional values of "neighbourhood, self help, and respect for the land that the old-timers…understand and appreciate" (p. 60), because he has suggested that these historical values still are present in rural communities and should be introduced to those who move to rural areas from non-rural areas. Thus, opportunities exist for collaboration between schools, institutions of higher education, and communities to provide necessary support for revitalization efforts while also tapping into an already established linkage between school and community.

Rurban Conceptualization

In urban counties with significant rural populations, this linkage necessitates an understanding of some of the characteristics that are shared by and unique to both the rural and urban populations—not with the intent of continuing to maintain a distinction between the two place-based identifiers, but instead to identify opportunities to remain conscious of the cultural inclusion of both. *Table 1* includes some social factors that may characterize rural and urban families, communities, and schools as identified by Ganong et al. (n.d.), Nachtingal (as cited in Schramm-Pate, 2002, p. 8), and Renfro, Huebner, Callahan, and Richey (2003).

Table 1

Comparison of Similarities and Differences between Rural and Urban Families, Communities, and Schools

Category	Rural	Urban	Both
Parenting Styles[a]	• Close-knit family ties • Emphasis on intellectual (grades in school) and emotional (expression of feelings) development • Spend more time interacting with parents • Teach children to be more affectionate, open with their feelings, and considerate (more likely to know others in their community) • Higher levels of parent monitoring of children does not lead to better child and adolescent outcomes • More likely to exchange resources exclusively with kin • More involvement in school events (academic and athletic) and committees (Provasnik et al., 2007)	• More mobile, fewer close-knit family ties • Emphasize social development (meeting new people) • More opportunities to interact with other children • Teach children to be more reserved and cautious in expression of feelings (less likely to know others in their environment) • Higher levels of parent monitoring of children leads to better child and adolescent outcomes (African American parents monitor children's activities more [perceive more risks]) • Receive, give, and expect more help from friends and less from kin	

(Table 1 continues)

(Table 1 continued)

Category	Rural	Urban	Both
Communities/ Schools[b]	• Personal/tightly linked • Generalists • Homogenous • Non-bureaucratic • Verbal communication • Who said it? • Time measured by seasons • Traditional values • Entrepreneur • Make do/respond to environment • Self-sufficiency • Poorer (less spendable income) • Less formal education • Smaller/less density	• Impersonal/loosely coupled • Specialists • Diverse • Bureaucratic • Written memos • What's said • Time measured by clocks • Liberal values • Corporate labor force • Rational planning to control environment • Problem-solving left to experts • Richer (more spendable income) • More formal education • Larger/greater density	• Escalating violence • Family breakdown • Influence of violence in the media • Lack of systematic resources to address challenges

[a]Information obtained from Ganong et al. (n.d.).
[b]Information obtained from Nachtingal (as cited in Schramm-Pate, 2002, p. 8) and Renfro, Huebner, Callahan, and Richey (2003).

With these comparisons in mind, educational stakeholders in urban areas with rural students may need to consider a reconceptualization of the rural-urban distinction toward something that might be considered "in between," particularly in the South where pockets of the region may meet the physical definitions of urban (in regards to population density) without all of the imagined characteristics of urban described by Leonardo and Hunter (2007). For example, in NC, 12 of the state's 20 urban or "transitional" counties (P. Woodie, personal communication, November 4, 2011) contain a significant percentage of rural schools (at least 25% of the counties' schools are considered rural by

the NCES (2011)). This means that many of these counties will likely include both urban and rural characteristics, which Bonner (1997) has termed "rurban."

According to Bonner (1997), "To distinguish between the *really* rural and the *really* urban, the term *rurban* is useful" (p. 110). This is largely due to that fact that rural and urban cannot be considered opposites because of the cross-over that exists between many rural and urban areas (Casey, 1998; Sim, 1988). For Sim (1988), rural and urban are not just places; they are processes. Many rural people and places experience a process of urbanization; however, there does not seem to be a "balancing process of ruralization" within urban areas (p. 23).Within a rurban space, such as an urban county with a significant rural population, opportunities exist for ruralization to meet the ongoing process of urbanization at work in many of these areas. According to Sim (1988), this process of ruralization might include "respect for nature, sensitivity to the presence of others and their needs, and an organic sense of total systems, in nature and in social relationships, in pride of workmanship and in the artisans' skills" (p. 23). Just as urban spaces have been mythologized in both positive and negative ways, so, too, have rural spaces with the imagined notion of rural as "good, simple, peaceful, but a dreadful place to earn a living…offer[ing] only hard work, a lack of conveniences, and prying neighbours" (Sim, 1988, p. 24). By accentuating the positive attributes of the rural while reflecting critically on the "narrowness, insularity, and conservatism" also associated with rural contexts, ruralization might provide the "counterbalancing influence to restrain [urbanization's] own destructive and colonizing violence" (Sim, 1988, p. 23).

By setting rural in opposition to urban as has been done in both the physical and sociological distinctions between rural and urban, labels such as "periphery, fringe, and hinterland" (Sim, 1988, p. 27) have been used to describe rural areas, staging urban as the primary locale from which all other locales are compared and designating urban as synonymous with society, or the dominant culture (economic, political, and social), of the US (Alexander, 2010; Schramm-Pate, 2002; Theobald & Wood, 2010). Sim (1988) has indicated the following:

> I am suggesting these labels contain assumptions and overtones of cultural urban imperialism that have the effect of extinguishing rural community life, for they offer an ideological justification for administrative arrangements that do violence to creative citizenship and local autonomy. The result, as in any imperialist system, is the legitimization of power falling into fewer and fewer hands. It also fosters a relation of dependency that is inefficient and costly. It depletes the human spirit. It destroys the community. (p. 27)

Instead, attention to rurality even within urban contexts needs to occur in schools in order to allow for a fuller examination of the issues of power at play in students' local communities. According to Foster (2007), the problem with these schools that serve students from "widely varying backgrounds" may be the "disconnection" from the communities served as well as the "lack of trust among the various constituencies that must work together to insure that the practices undertaken in schools actually lead to improved academic achievement" (p. 774). Thus, a study of rural culture within an urban area might serve to inform future attempts at collaboration in the development of curricula that are culturally relevant for all students (rural and urban). By recognizing the historical and sociological forces that have shaped the rural-urban discourse, examination

of the “space between” (what one might consider rurban) might provide educators with another way to connect curricula to the complex identities of their students. However, getting to a rurban conceptualization requires examination of the strengths, challenges, and historical and cultural signifiers of the rural experience, since the rural aspects of communities are either ignored in favor of urbanization or relegated to simplified stereotypes.

CHAPTER IV

LITERATURE ON RURAL CULTURE

Exploring the cultural meanings of "rural" in an urban county in North Carolina requires an understanding of previous research on the strengths and challenges of the rural population, including rural schools. While this prior research cannot be used to develop common characteristics of the rural population due to diverse meanings and experiences of "rural," a review of rural characteristics identified by other researchers may provide insights into themes acknowledged by survey and interview participants as indicative of their definitions of rural culture. Because of the institutionalization of rural stereotypes that impact rural students and communities, examination of the history of rural marginalization also is necessary in order to develop an appreciation for rural traditions while also remaining open to critical reflection.

Strengths of Rural Population

While the characteristics of "rural" may differ based on location and perspective, making it difficult to identify general strengths (and challenges) of the rural population, prior studies on rural communities and schools have identified some strengths that may translate to various rural experiences. According to Alexander (2010), rural communities have been viewed as attractive locations for those looking for more community-oriented locations to rear families, retire, or relocate. This is due to the perspective that rural areas offer a more relaxed lifestyle, with less traffic and crime (Alexander, 2010; Hobbs,

1979). Additionally, Sim (1988) has identified respect for nature; awareness of the needs of others; and a sense of the totality of systems in nature, social relationships, and craftsmanship as representative of a ruralized process. Research also has shown that some of the traditionally-viewed strengths of rural schools are that there are more personal interactions between teachers and students and that the schools are more connected with the community and focus on more individualized instruction (Brown & Schafft, 2011; Casey, 1998; Collins, 1999; Vernon-Feagans et al., 2010). Additionally, Casey (1998) has asserted that smaller schools allow for greater participation in school activities and sports and positive effects on student performance, resulting in greater personal satisfaction and more positive attitudes toward schooling. Schramm-Pate (2002) has emphasized that "many rural schools create an atmosphere conducive to school improvement including low student-teacher ratios, individualized instruction and attention, cooperative learning opportunities, close relationships and ties to the community, and strong staff commitment" (p. 27). Additionally, rural teachers have been viewed as more accommodating and versatile and more likely to report higher job satisfaction and fewer behavioral problems among students (Brown & Schafft, 2011; Collins, 1999; Schramm-Pate, 2001). Rural school administrators have been viewed positively as well, being seen as more willing to empower teachers, parents, and students to participate in policy making (Collins, 1999; Schramm-Pate, 2002).

Schramm-Pate (2002) has discussed some unique features of rural schools: "slower pace and less pressured environment; a spirit of cooperation; more opportunities for leadership and development; and less formal interaction among students, staff, and

parents" (p. 8). Additional strengths of effective rural and small schools include community involvement, greater student and parent participation in school activities, small class size, individualized instruction, increased knowledge of students' unique qualities, increased connection between teachers and students, inclusion, fewer interpersonal and organizational issues, an approach to issues without generalized policies, multi-age groupings, authentic assessment, experiential learning, and integrated curriculum (Brown & Schafft, 2011; Collins, 1999; Schramm-Pate, 2002; Smith, 1999; Vernon-Feagans et al., 2010). Samples of rural students at Western Carolina University (WCU) have indicated perspectives that the word "rural" brings to mind concepts of peacefulness, safety, warmth, closeness, comfort, friendliness, home, quiet, and relaxation (Herzog & Pittman, 1999).

Challenges for Rural Population

However, other rural students sampled at WCU have indicated connotations of "rural" that included negativity, lack of culture, nothingness, and isolation (Herzog & Pittman, 1999). The "negative rural attributes" that Sim (1988) has identified as "narrowness, insularity, and conservatism, which have deprived rural people of the capacity to counter the powerful forces of urbanization" (p. 23) align with some of the negative characteristics identified by the rural students at WCU. Hayes and Lee (2005) also have cited the research of Corzine et al. (1999) as confirming a "subculture of violence" in the rural South. According to Hayes and Lee (2005), a *culture of honor* in which, largely, White men from the rural South use violence to defend honor in situations involving "defense of self, personal honor, family, and personal property" (p. 595) has

developed since the early settlement of the rural South by herdsmen, who self-policed the region. Additionally, while strong connections between home, school, and community are cited as strengths of rural areas, Renfro, Huebner, Callahan, and Richey (2003) also have found that families, schools, and churches have lost influence over rural citizens. Herzog and Pittman (1999) also have indicated that a "brain drain" exists in rural communities due to lack of professional and managerial opportunities in these areas despite the fact that 96% of rural income comes from sources other than farming (Katsinas, 2007).

Schramm-Pate (2002) has suggested that 80% of rural individuals live in counties where less than 15% of the adult population has a bachelor's degree (versus 21% of urban residents) and where high-education jobs are less available. With lower income levels overall, rural families also are less able to afford college (Schramm-Pate, 2002). This can impact the perception that rural students have of the value of higher education and the necessity of further study. Thus, many may choose to opt for immediate employment instead of additional education. However, projections show that jobs coming to the South in the future will require education beyond high school, though not necessarily a bachelor's degree (Schramm-Pate, 2002). Thus, at least a community college education will be needed for the economic stability of many rural communities. When rural residents are able to send their children to college, they typically can only afford less expensive and less prestigious colleges (Schramm-Pate, 2002). Housing also becomes an issue, since "roughly half of rural high school students live in counties that have no colleges, compared with a tenth of all urban students" (Schramm-Pate, 2002, p. 29). However, many rural community colleges do address the issue of distance from

home by offering on-campus housing (90%) and fielding athletic teams (61%; Katsinas, 2007).

Currently, data show that rural community colleges serve 48% of all first-time, full-time community college students (Katsinas, 2007). Of these students, 63% incur debt; yet, people who work outside of metropolitan areas tend to make 25.5% less than those who work within urban areas (Katsinas, 2007). In one sample of rural students that went on to higher education, almost half indicated plans to return home after college, with most of these students planning to work in the educational field (Herzog & Pittman, 1999).

Rural Society

Beaulieu (as cited in Alexander, 2010), a rural sociologist, has sited eleven key challenges facing rural communities:

> (1) a dramatic influx of new people with a diversity of cultures, languages, and values; (2) the out-migration of talented youth and adults who seek greater economic opportunities in larger populated areas; (3) the accelerated growth of service-sector jobs that are offering rural workers fewer opportunities to secure decent-paying jobs; (4) the stubborn persistence of poverty among rural women, children, and minorities; (5) the decaying state of roads, bridges, and other basic components of the community's infrastructure; (6) rural individuals' declining capacity to afford or to have access to quality health care in close proximity to their places of residence; (7) the accelerated demands on rural schools to meet performance and accountability standards that are best suited or modeled for urban and suburban school systems; (8) the daily outflow of workers whose absence hinders their active engagement in the civic life of their communities; (9) local governance structures that are struggling to keep pace with programs management and fiscal responsibilities that were once the purview of federal and state agencies; (10) urban areas that are encroaching on the rich natural resources of rural areas; and (11) a technologically sophisticated world that has had a limited presence in the corridors of many rural areas. (p. 256)

These challenges are interconnected, with one factor influencing another. However, the diversity of challenges impacting rural society highlights the need to recognize the economic, socio-political, and educational issues at work.

Rural Poverty

Jensen (2009) has defined poverty as "a chronic and debilitating condition that results from multiple adverse synergistic risk factors [that] affects the mind, body, and soul" (p. 6). The origins and indicators of poverty are complex and may mean something different for different people. Among several different forms of poverty, Jensen (2009) makes a comparison between rural and urban poverty.

Poverty differences. Jensen (2009) has defined urban poverty as that which occurs in metropolitan areas of at least 50,000 people. Living in densely populated areas, the urban poor typically "deal with a complex aggregate of chronic and acute stressors (including crowding, violence, and noise) and are dependent on often-inadequate large-city services" (Jensen, 2009, p. 6). On the other hand, Jensen (2009) has defined rural poverty as occurring in non-metropolitan areas with less than 50,000 people. Because rural areas are less densely populated, "families often have less access to services, support for disabilities, and quality education opportunities" (Jensen, 2009, p. 6). Additionally, rural areas tend to include more single-guardian households, fewer job opportunities, and higher poverty rates than urban areas (Jensen, 2009). In fact, "the rural poverty rate is growing and has exceeded the urban rate every year since data collection began in the 1960s" (Jensen, 2009, p. 6), with the probability of falling below the poverty

line two-and-a-half times more likely for rural residents than urban residents (Hobbs, 1979).

Over 50% of all rural children live below 200% of poverty compared to 37% of urban children (Vernon-Feagans et al., 2010). In cases where at least one family member has a full-time job, two-thirds of these rural families are living in poverty (Vernon-Feagans et al., 2010). Even in multiple-earner households, one quarter of these families remain below the poverty level (Vernon-Feagans et al., 2010). These data suggest that jobs in rural areas tend to pay less than those in non-rural areas. *Table 2* provides a comparison of some of the similarities and differences between rural and urban poverty in the US.

Table 2

Comparison of Similarities and Differences between Rural and Urban Poverty in the US

Category	Rural	Urban	Both
Poverty Rates	• 15.1% • Higher for rural minorities than urban minorities	• 12.5%	
Persistent Poverty	• 18% of rural counties are persistent poverty counties • 88% of all persistent poverty counties	• 4% of urban counties are persistent poverty counties	
Poverty Demographics	• Homogeneous poor (66.3% of poor are White) • Latino/as are the fastest growing ethnic group	• Ethnically diverse poor (53.2% of poor are non-White (25.2% Black, 28% Latino/a))	
Poverty Factors	• Often substandard education (especially in low-wealth areas) • Few adults likely to have college degree • Often lack economic diversity • Often lack adequate child care facilities, public transportation, and information technology • Discrimination based on race, social class, or gender persists in some areas	• Inadequate support services • Crowding	
Community Problems	• Unemployment/ underemployment • Taxes	• Crime • Problems with kids	• Drugs • Education • Infrastructure

(Table 2 continues)

(Table 2 continued)

Category	Rural	Urban	Both
Health Care	• 28% consider their health fair/poor • 80 male deaths for every 100,000 people ages 1-24 • 40 female deaths for every 100,000 people ages 1-24 • Lower proportion of non-elderly population covered by private health insurance	• 21% consider their health fair/poor • 60 male deaths for every 100,000 people ages 1-24 • 30 female deaths for every 100,000 people ages 1-24	

Note. Information obtained from Ganong et al. (n.d.).

While the majority of rural poor tend to be White, the probability of being poor is approximately three times higher for rural racial and ethnic minorities (Swanson, 1996). From the period of 1980 to 1990, racial minorities in rural settings made less progress than rural Whites in the areas of lowering poverty levels, increasing income levels, and improving occupational and educational levels (Swanson, 1996). In fact, regression occurred in most areas. Additionally, gender differences within minority groups were present, with men having less work and Black females, for example, spending longer than average at work (Swanson, 1996). The number of single-parent households, particularly among the rural Black population, also contributed to these economic differences. While many Blacks have migrated to urban settings, 90% of rural Blacks live in the South, where the ethnic minorities tend to be concentrated geographically in rural areas with the poorest economic outlook (Swanson, 1996). With such widespread poverty in rural areas, rural youth are left with limited support for physical and mental health, a thriving

education system, or a sustained economy (as opposed to out-migration of work; Hartley, 2004; Hatfield, 2002).

Rural Schools

Some rural schools also are faced with limited resources while not seeming to benefit from economic changes in the same ways that cities have (Alexander, 2010; Smith, 1999). Instead, rural areas seem to be "property rich, but cash poor" (Smith, 1999, p. 44). Additionally, rural teachers tend to have more daily course preparations than urban teachers, with more multi-age and multi-grade classrooms, while receiving lower salaries, having less experience and less advanced degrees, and working in poorer facilities (Saha, 1997; Smith, 1999). Curricular opportunities in rural schools also tend to be less than in urban schools, and fewer rural children enter into postsecondary education (Smith, 1999). Yet, "rural youth remain the primary export that their home counties have to offer the rest of the nation" (Smith, 1999, p. 44). Some of the challenges impacting rural students' transition to school include low economics and pre-school skills, families that work more nonstandard work hours, further distance from school, less access to public transportation, less educated teacher workforce, less access to resources (including professional development), and loss of tax base and population to support schools (Vernon-Feagans et al., 2010). According to Herzog and Pittman (1999), the perspectives of the rural students at WCU send the message that "there is true value in relationships, that community is an anchor,…that peace and safety lie within…rural communities" (p. 22) and that, while rural schools have good qualities, they could be better at preparing students for college and providing opportunities for disadvantaged students.

Educational Policy

Educational policy presents challenges for rural schools, which are under increased pressure to "compete" in educational, social, and economic systems that value metropolitan methods of operation. In the current high-stakes testing environment, large low-income and English Language Learner (ELL) populations in rural schools may impact assessment performance and, thus, school funding (Brown & Schafft, 2011). Additionally, the small size of some rural schools can impact assessment outcomes (Brown & Schafft, 2011). One of the other challenges for rural schools is that increased accountability measures may lead to increasing disconnect between the curriculum and the students' and communities' needs (Brown & Schafft, 2011). The policies regarding the hiring of "highly qualified" teachers also present issues for some rural districts that struggle to recruit and retain teachers (Brown & Schafft, 2011; Collins, 2008).

Rural schools and districts sometimes have difficulty recruiting teachers due to issues of geographic, social, cultural, and/or professional isolation and less access to professional development opportunities (Brown & Schafft, 2011; Collins, 1999; Saha, 1997; Sealander, Eigenberger, Peterson, Shallady, & Prater, 2001; Vernon-Feagans et al., 2010). While rural schools and districts tend to be small in terms of student enrollment, 20% of all public school teachers work in rural schools (Jimerson, 2005), though teachers in rural areas tend to be younger and less experienced than those in urban areas (Schramm-Pate, 2002). Also, about a third of rural teachers have graduate degrees versus half of urban teachers, with differences largely due to discrepancies in experience-pay between rural and urban areas (Schramm-Pate, 2002). More experienced teachers tend to

make more in urban areas than rural areas, with urban salaries that are 35% higher for teachers with masters' degrees and 20 or more years of experience (Schramm-Pate, 2002). Likewise, "urban salaries are about 21% higher for starting teachers" (Schramm-Pate, 2002, p. 27). Overall, teachers in rural districts typically earn salaries that are 13.4% lower than in urban and suburban districts (Jimerson, 2005). Additionally, few new teachers have been trained in education programs that offer coursework and practical experiences focused on rural students (Sealander et al., 2001).

Researchers have suggested that efforts should be made to provide pre-service opportunities within rural schools and to recruit teachers from rural backgrounds who are able to teach multiple content areas and grades, are willing to teach students of diverse abilities, are interested in supporting extracurricular activities, and are able to adjust to the community (Collins, 1999; Sealander et al., 2001; Theobald, 2002). In fact, Theobald (2002) has asserted that universities have a moral obligation to prepare student teachers for work in rural schools (just as many prepare students for work in urban schools). According to Ladson-Billings (2006), "culture is usually used as a code word for difference and perhaps deviance in the world of teacher education" (p. 107), which further necessitates the inclusion of holistic examination of rural schools in teacher preparation. Theobald (2002) has suggested that the resistance to highlight rural education is the result of a "cultural predisposition to denigrate rurality" (p. 7). In addition to preparing and recruiting rural teachers, Collins (1999) has indicated that retention efforts should include a school-community based effort.

School Consolidation

Another challenge for rural schools has been the shift toward consolidation. The idea of consolidated schools has been debated since the early twentieth century as advocates have cited efficiency and standardization as justification, while opposition to consolidation have argued for the preservation of community traditions and local control (Brown & Schafft, 2011). During the shift toward increasingly urban schools that are consolidated, standardized, and centralized, many small community schools have been closed in favor of larger regional schools, which has been described by Casey (1998) and others as the "single most damaging policy decision regarding the quality of schooling and sustainability of rural communities made in [the twentieth] century" (p. 13). According to Coles (as cited by Casey, 1998), "All too often, rural children are not so much short-changed by inadequate school facilities, books, and supplies—the physical or technological side of education—as by a more insidious, and arguably, more dangerous assault…[on their] intelligence and sensibility…in the name of 'modernization' or 'progress'" (p. 13). While these urban standards may have improved the adjustment of rural students to the urban marketplace and higher education, this standardization also may have "desensitized students to alternative opportunities" (Hobbs, 1979, p. 5). The irony, according to Strange (2002), is that the consolidation of rural schools has been encouraged, while the benefits of small schools (including increased academic performance, progress toward graduation, and satisfaction and decreased behavior problems and dropout rates) have been touted by many individuals in urban locations. This move toward consolidation in rural education has led to the loss of valuable cultural

capital, such as individualized instruction and strong connections between students and teachers and schools and communities, which has changed the tradition of the school's centrality to the life of the community (Hobbs, 1979).

The relative lack of isolation once experienced by rural communities and now lessened by advanced technologies and increased urban expansion has resulted in a decrease in local control (Casey, 1998). According to Casey (1998), "democracy egalitarianism, and independence have historically been considered foundational ideological elements of rural life" (p. 16), with rural communities depending on themselves for educational, economic, spiritual, and healthcare support. "Democratic ideals, tempered by a strong sense of justice and fairness thrived in these areas, as did a sense of independence, witnessed most clearly in rural folks' distrust of 'big government'" (p. 16); thus, local governance has served as the means by which democratic principles were enacted in the local community. With less local control in modern rural communities, these principles constitute more of a "rural ideal" than a "rural reality" (p. 16). However, this perspective is not shared by all educational reformers.

Modern Reform

The debate between supporters of national education and supporters of local control continues, with differences in perspectives on reform. Smith (1999) has recognized three groups of modern educational reformers, who present differing solutions to common problems: "neo-romantics," "romantic traditionalists," and "political traditionalists" (p. 41). Smith (1999) has defined the "neo-romantics" as those that

"acknowledge the negative as well as the positive aspects of country living, are critical of the bureaucratic organization of urban schools, occasionally sound like John Dewey progressives or George Counts social reconstructionists, [and] believe that geography matters in considering school reform communities and their schools" (p. 41). The "romantic traditionalists" have been described as "often policy makers and scholars whose academic interests are in practical, rather than theoretical, matters" and who "recognize the uniqueness of rural American life, while adhering to the belief that there are common ways to improve education in both city and country schools" (p. 42). The "political traditionalists," on the other hand, are typically policymakers or administrators "who are inclined to want rapid solutions to clearly described, uncomplicated problems" (pp. 42-43). Former N.C. Governor James Hunt is provided as an example of a "political traditionalist"—typically men of the New South, who "know the words that denigrate a person because he lives in a particular place" yet "know personally the potential education holds" (p. 43). These "political traditionalists" implement policies, standards, and education plans, "without regard to geography, viewing their entire state as at risk" (p. 43), and instead focus on what has worked to provide citizens with knowledge and skills necessary for productivity. According to Smith (1999), for this latter group, efficiency, quality-control, and cost-effectiveness are more important than place (other than when describing the state as a whole).

Regardless of perspective, the decrease in local control in education seems to have led to the diminishing of "the traditional sense of involvement, intimacy, and identification existing between rural parents and their schools" (Schramm-Pate, 2002, p.

25). Additionally, this decreasing local control has led to policy-making that tends to be further removed from the specific needs of the rural community. With infusion of urban values, aspirations, and skills, out-migration may be encouraged to the detriment of the preservation and improvement of rural schools and communities (Schramm-Pate, 2002). Instead, Sher (1988) has asserted that policy makers need to attend to the local traditions, values, and customs of the rural areas and recognize the diversity of the area, instead of treating all rural districts as if they are the same. Additionally, educators should be cautioned about sending the message that success means migrating to the city. As Theobald and Wood (2010) have asserted, this also sends the reverse message that "staying rural means failing on some level" (p. 31).

History of Rural Marginalization

While urbanites and suburbanites seem to make up the dominant culture in today's American society, rural individuals did not always constitute the marginalized in regards to locale. However, to understand the current system that privileges urban society, one must return to feudal Europe. At that time and for about a thousand years, wealthy rural landowners, including the royal family, dictated how communities would operate (Theobald & Wood, 2010). With the birth of the US and the dawn of industrialization, this began to change. In the early nineteenth century, factories sprang up throughout England and with that came the growth of the bourgeoisie (many of whom were urban bankers, craftsmen, and factory owners) as well as the desire for cheap food (Theobald & Wood, 2010). Because wages were tied to the amount of food that workers could afford, thus making their work worthwhile, factory owners looked to import food

from the US and other countries in order to avoid the high cost of food in England (Theobald & Wood, 2010). As a result, the cost of English grain declined, leading the majority of the English Parliament from rural areas to impart tariffs on imported grain (Theobald & Wood, 2010). Obviously, industrialists were aghast, and prominent economists, including David Ricardo, began writing about and lobbying for cheap food as a benefit to the masses (Theobald & Wood, 2010).

After a decade of conflict between the increasingly wealthy industrialists and the wealthy rural landowners, manufacturers and traders gained high status while rural farmers and other rural workers lost status. By the end of the nineteenth century, urban and rural power and privilege had reversed, which was supported by various intellectuals, including Marx (as cited by Theobald & Wood, 2010), who said, "The bourgeoisie…has greatly increased the urban population as compared with the rural, and has thus rescued a considerable part of the population from the idiocy of rural life" (p. 21). (Note: Current translations of this Marx quote indicate that Marx was focusing more on the "isolation" of rural life than the "idiocy" (Foster, 2003).) Thus, began the perspective that rural individuals were living in the past. According to Theobald and Wood (2010), they were viewed as "backward, unwilling to change with the times, too ignorant to play a role in the formation of policy" (p. 21).

While this shift in power was occurring in Europe, tensions between urban and rural interests also were growing in the US. One example of this tension was Shays' Rebellion, in which rural farmers united under the leadership of Daniel Shays, a military leader in the Revolutionary War, to fight a newly passed law in Boston that required

debts to be paid in gold rather than farm commodities (Theobald & Wood, 2010). This law put indebted farmers in a situation of imprisonment or foreclosure (Theobald & Wood, 2010). After fighting back, the federal government sent troops after the farmers, demonstrating a pattern of putting capital interests ahead of those of the farmers. Though Jefferson and Jackson changed the culture slightly during their times in the presidency (supporters of Jackson—who also was known as "Old Hickory"—would become known as "hicks"), the differences in urban and rural interests were clear and the distrust and conflict between the groups had been established (Theobald & Wood, 2010).

These conflicting interests were highlighted further in policy decisions regarding tariffs and the supply of money. With the federal government placing high tariffs on imported manufactured goods, U.S. urban industries began to reap the benefits of a competitive edge while rural farmers were forced to pay higher amounts for the goods they often used (Theobald & Wood, 2010). This served as one of the catalysts for Southern calls for succession, which resulted in the U.S. Civil War and further tensions between urban and rural interests (Theobald & Wood, 2010). With the costs associated with the Civil War, gold-supported currency was suspended in favor of the lower-valued "greenbacks" (Theobald & Wood, 2010). This meant that when largely-urban bankers requested debt repayment by rural farmers, the farmers were repaying their debts with money that was worth more than the loans they had received (Theobald & Wood, 2010). Tensions over policy regarding the money supply led to the introduction of new political parties and labor unions, leading to attempts to unite rural and urban laborers for a period until the Great Depression of the 1930s (Theobald & Wood, 2010). However, cultural

messages of rural individuals as backwards continued and fractured attempts at unification.

Immigration also played a role in the urban-rural divide. With the beginning of the Industrial Revolution at the onset of the U.S. Civil War, small, family-based agrarian cultures gave way to large-scale production and, eventually, a more globalized American culture by the end of the Second World War (Casey, 1998). In the early twentieth century, when the nation still was predominantly rural, Roosevelt's Commission on Country Life presented recommendations that rural individuals remain in rural areas in order to prevent the undesirable mixing with the Southern and Eastern European immigrants working and living in the cities (Lowe, 2010; Theobald & Wood, 2010). This commission also made the recommendation for rural schools to move toward consolidation as well as the following key factors to address the "rural life problem:"

> Educational redirection so that what happened in classrooms centered on the rural experiences of students; improvement of physical facilities; expansion of the school to include serving the community as a social center; trained teachers; better supervision; legislation sensitive to the needs and conditions of the countryside; …establishment of teacher-community partnerships; and sufficient resources to meet the challenges of improvement (Smith, 1999, pp. 32-33).

Efforts to refocus attention to rural life were developed in response to the "ascendance of modernity and the rise of an urban consumer culture" in order to "reassert the traditional values that were rooted in rural and small town life" (Barron, 2006, p. 384).

However, while consolidation largely was implemented within rural areas, being first introduced by the National Education Association's Committee of Twelve on Rural

Schools in the 1890s, the other recommendations began to fall by the wayside with the first large migration from rural areas to the cities. The 1920 U.S. Census showed that "for the first time in the nation's history a majority of Americans lived in urban areas" (Barron, 2006, p. 384). This "drastic shift in population from rural to urban centres meant that within a period of 100 years, many societies, that had been demographically rural for centuries, became demographically urban" (Bonner, 1998, p. 167). Such changes in population continued with the droughts that followed the Great Depression (Casey, 1998; Smith, 1999). Struggling to sustain their farms, many people in rural areas moved to the cities, where job opportunities were more readily available due to increasing industrialization. Some of those who had remained in rural areas eventually migrated to cities at the end of World War II because of the availability of work building highways to connect major urban areas throughout the country (Casey, 1998). This out-migration between 1929 and 1969 cost rural communities an estimated $1 trillion in human capital (Hobbs, 1979). Also, many teachers, going to urban areas for their pre-service training, were educated in programs that viewed urban teaching as normative. Thus, many teachers began to view rural teaching as undesirable and lacking upward mobility (Smith, 1999).

With the mass exodus of individuals from rural areas to urban areas and the increased focus on efficiency and cost-effectiveness, rural areas saw an increase in the "consolidation movement" (Casey, 1998, p. 12). During this period, many family farms were purchased by larger corporations, and many farmers were replaced by cost-cutting machines. This emphasis on efficiency and business management resulted in the rejection of the unique character of rural areas (Schramm-Pate, 2002). Additionally, popular

literature of the early and middle twentieth century reinforced images of urban life as "with the times" and rural life as a thing of the past (Theobald & Wood, 2010), though this perceived difference between urban and rural living also was portrayed thousands of years earlier in Aesop's fable *The Country Mouse and the City Mouse* (Smith, 1999). These cultural images along with a growing "commitment to industrialism, corporate capitalism, and urban life" (Schramm-Pate, 2002, p. 24) also led to the increased urbanization of rural schools, which slowly resulted in increased consolidation, standardization, and centralization via an ideology of "growth, efficiency, and conformity" (Schramm-Pate, 2002, p. 24). Smith (1999) also has suggested that the current urbanization of rural schools can be explained by "the ideological and cultural implications of the Civil War;" "pervasive, persistent anti-intellectualism, associated more negatively with the country than the city;" and "our paradoxical love-hate relationship with things rural" (p. 46).

Since a goal of public education (not necessarily shared by all educators) is to teach the cultural norms of American society and since the US has encouraged an image of "progress," which is synonymous with urban development, rural school children have struggled to view themselves as participants in American culture until they leave their rural homes for the cities (Theobald & Wood, 2010). The cultural message that bigger is better (e.g., the big city is better than the small town) infiltrates all aspects of education, from curriculum to the organization of schools themselves.

Rather than taking a deficit perspective on rural living, educators should work to incorporate rural history and values into the largely-urbanized curriculum. As Casey (1998) has stated:

> The story of rural life in this country is one that has been neglected, too long overlooked or relegated to the past as if to suggest that there is no present rural reality worth telling. Over the last 50 years, or so, American attitudes toward rural areas of the country have shifted from pride and concern to indifference and ultimately neglect (Sher, 1977). It is by no means a coincidence that this shift in public attitudes occurred at the same time that the rural population was in the midst of a steady decline…The "lure of the city," its lights, its excitement, and its promise of work pulled hard on the hopes and dreams of many rural families who felt the conflict of choosing between a life they had long known and loved and economic survival (Degler, 1970). (p. 6)

Casey (1998) has cited Keizer's assertion that too many people regard rural and urban as opposites as opposed to complements. Instead, reflection on U.S. history demonstrates that the migratory patterns of Americans have created various shifts in the rural and urban populations, where the needs of one population have impacted the makeup of another. Thus, this historical interdependence requires a valuing of the rural story (even within urban locales) and acknowledgement of the impact of cultural messages that privilege urban over rural. Recognizing the origins of some rural stereotypes also can bring awareness of the hegemony that continues to oppress rural individuals and, likewise, rural students.

Rural Stereotypes

Coinciding with rural-urban migrations during the early to middle twentieth century were the geographic migrations of marginalized Whites. According to Heilman

(2004), “Scottish Appalachians and poor rural Whites of underclass English origin” (p. 67) most commonly settled in the rural South and Midwest after many were brought to North America involuntarily as indentured servants or slaves. In fact, Heilman (2004) has estimated that at least half of White colonial immigrants were slaves or indentured servants: some voluntary and some as prisoners repaying debts. Once freed from servitude (primarily due to the increase in Black slave labor), many of these individuals fell into poverty, working as unskilled laborers or tenant farmers (Heilman, 2004). Unlike Eastern and Southern Europeans and Irish immigrants, who gained power through a strong collective identity and affiliation with long-established American Catholics, the Scottish Appalachians and poor rural Whites of the English underclass had less of a collective determination and were less successful lobbying for education and employment rights (Heilman, 2004). “During the nineteenth and early twentieth century, while the Irish and Eastern and Southern Europeans were typically employed as laborers and in service and manufacturing work, Scottish Appalachians and poor Southern Whites were most often employed in agricultural and mining activities” (p. 68), which often were more isolated, leading to less group solidarity. Additionally, many of these individuals moved to unsettled, often unproductive, lands, resulting in negative social opinions of this group and establishing the moniker “white trash” (p. 68) to describe this group of Southern rural poor. These negative sentiments were so strong, Heilman (2004) has cited the governor of NC in 1977 as describing these individuals as “the lowest scum and rabble…[who] build themselves sorry huts and live in a beastly sort of plenty” (p. 68). This negative stereotype of Poor Southern Whites and Appalachian people still continues

today, with words such as “poor, violent, crude, and ignorant” (p. 69), used to describe these individuals.

These poor Southerners also regarded education as a luxury connected with wealth; thus, resistance to formal education existed among the oppressed during Reconstruction as well as the oppressors, who did not want to have their property taxed for the education of the laboring class (Schramm-Pate, 2002). The mindset of many poor Southerners that “higher education is not for the likes of us” is a powerful holdover from this period in history, as are the low expectations for poor rural children that are held by educators, policy makers, and even parents (Schramm-Pate, 2002, p. 30). Additionally, the establishment of positions of power and resistance to power that occurred during this time have resulted in “principles of normalization,” with rural schools serving as microcosms of the societal system of “classification, division, and hierarchization” (Schramm-Pate, 2002, p. 32).

Heilman (2004) has emphasized that challenges continue to exist for marginalized Whites in schools. Because students in these rural communities seem to be racially homogenized, teachers often fail to engage with multicultural issues, viewing them as irrelevant to their student population (Heilman, 2004). “Yet, there is often unnoticed diversity and oppression” (p. 70). According to Heilman (2004), marginalized ethnic Whites can be identified by common, definable features:

> Students are descendants of a historically marginalized constituent from a specific ethnic group, though they often may have no sense of being from a distinct ethnic group (Alba & Logan, 1997). Their social class status is low, either working class or poor. Their speech and writing patterns (Eller, 1987) reflect dialects or accents

> of English that are associated with poverty and lack of education and sometimes treated as communicative disorders (American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, 1998). Levels of educational attainment among family members are low (Macleod, 1995). Students have generally negative beliefs about school, teachers, themselves, and their job futures (Brantlinger, 1994; Fiene, 1991). Students are also socially and educationally marginalized in schools (Macleod, 1995; McNeal, 1998; Oakes, 1992). (p. 70)

Chronic generational poverty also has been shown to be a key identifier (Heilman, 2004).

If race is a social construction, then Heilman (2004) has challenged that these marginalized ethnic Whites may not be viewed as fully White due to the oppression experienced by these individuals that is similar to that of non-Whites: "class stigma, discrimination due to language and dialect use, low educational attainment, under-representation in the curriculum, and negative stereotypes" (p. 70). Thus, when the discussion of Whiteness occurs in education, these discussions typically center on "the construction of White privilege rather than White diversity, marginalized Whites, or the difficulties of representing the 'other' or the marginalized" (p. 71). By grouping all Whites into a conceptualization of the "dominant culture," "there is no room to consider the existence of marginalized ethnic Whites" (p. 72). If, however, pre-service teaching classes attend to issues of "exploitation, marginalization, powerlessness, …cultural imperialism and violence" (p. 72), then educators might find opportunities to practice multicultural education even within settings that appear to include no ethnic diversity.

The attention to oppression in rural communities also is important, where the "national priority has been to exploit both the natural and human resources of rural America in order to enhance the status of the already rich and powerful" (Schramm-Pate,

2002, p. 7). Thus, society places the "pursuit of profit and power ahead of the needs of people," with rural people (and children and schools) viewed as expendable (Schramm-Pate, 2002, p. 7). Donehower (2007) also has suggested that the pervasive stereotype that rural regions are distinct and problems to be solved has led to common efforts to "'modernize'" the population by bringing them into line with the technological, economic, and cultural systems of urban life;" "recognize the culture as a thing apart from urban life and work to preserve its unique character;" and "relocate the people to urban or suburban areas and abandon the region to nature" (pp. 32-34). In fact, many rural students seem to have internalized messages that rural lacks value, leading to the development of an inferiority complex based on negative stereotypes (Herzog & Pittman, 1999).

These stereotypes include the images of the "country bumpkin," "redneck," "hillbilly," and "hick," which represent rural individuals as "the healthy, naïve, slow-witted, unsophisticated, ignorant, ultraconservative, penniless soul from beyond the outer fringes of the interstate" (Herzog & Pittman, 1999, p. 14). According to Herzog and Pittman (1999), the *Oxford English Dictionary* has referred to the negative stereotype of the rural "bumpkin" as far back as the sixteenth century, indicating the level to which these stereotypes have been ingrained in Western culture. Donehower (2007) also has asserted that a dual-stereotype exists in popular media, perpetuated by members of society including professional educators, of the rural person as both "pioneer" and "barbarian" (p. 45). English literature, which are widely used in schools today, include stories that serve ideological perspectives that stem from and contribute to capitalism and

distributions of wealth and power, reinforcing both romantic ideas of rural and rural as lesser-than (Johnson & Howley, 2000).

Through structural analysis of the cultural history of the country and the city in English literature, Williams (1973), a literary professor, has found repeated images of rural life as one of "peace, innocence, and simple virtue" as well as "backwardness, ignorance, [and] limitation" while urban life has been depicted as one of achievement through "learning, communication, and light" and "noise, worldliness, and ambition" (Johnson & Howley, 2000, p. 147). Yet, Williams has found that the reality of rural life throughout periods in history corresponding with these literary images has been one of "social and economic inequities and the exploitation of nature and human resources" (Johnson & Howley, 2000, p. 147). In Williams's findings, there was no ideal rural life just passed; instead, the romanticized images of an innocent rural life have been deliberate misrepresentations of social context that ignore the difficult realities of rural life (Johnson & Howley, 2000). Instead, Williams has identified "a narrative of the exploitation and colonization of rural people by the interests of capital," in which "culturally articulated history works to legitimate a political economy devised to serve the interests of a select few, at the expense, throughout most of 'modern' history, of a rural majority" (Johnson & Howley, 2000, p. 148). Through political and economic colonization, mirrored by cultural colonization (collective consciousness), existing power relations are sustained by members of urban society as well as rural educators, who as rural elites, perpetuate "cosmopolitan agendas…to the detriment of rural ones" (Johnson & Howley, 2000, p. 149).

Similar to Williams, Barron (2006) has analyzed rural images in movies that were released around the time that American society was shifting from a largely rural to urban society. In Barron's (2006) estimation, "these movies were instrumental in establishing new understandings of the countryside for a modern, urban nation" (p. 384), because they served to provide "comfort in a time of transition" while also facilitating "the new order by subverting traditional understandings of agrarian life and distancing it from its previous position at the core of American culture" (p. 385). In both romanticizing individuals' rural upbringings and trivializing the modern countryside, these films allowed rural-to-urban migrants to feel more comfortable with urban and suburban culture (Barron, 2006). These cinematic influences resulted in a shift from a nostalgic look at rural life as morally superior to urban life to a characterization of rural live as a thing of the past, with rural individuals "cast primarily as comic figures" (Barron, 2006, p. 406). As Barron (2006) has stated regarding this "growing cultural marginality" (p. 406) of rural life, "Increasingly, the farm was seen as a place to be from rather than as a place to be" (pp. 394-395).

Margolis (1979) has found that the type of cultural colonization identified through Williams's structural analysis of English literature and Barron's analysis of early American films continues in popular media today, including television and movies, through the perpetuation of rural nostalgia that neglects circumstances of modern rural life. These images contribute to placism (i.e., discrimination based on place) and the reinforcement of "Metropollyanna" (i.e., "widespread delusion that sooner or later everyone will move to the cities and suburbs and live happily ever after" (Margolis, 1979,

p. 21)). Additionally, Collins (2008) has argued that the influence of the media has made the rural South indistinguishable from the rest of the country in many ways, which puts the region at risk of losing its cultural identity. Protection of this regional identity and the combatting of negative stereotypes and the fatalist mindset that rural decline is inevitable can be incorporated into the classroom by encouraging rural students to value the knowledge they have to contribute and by recognizing the diversity of rural communities.

The inclusion of a multicultural perspective is important in educational settings with seemingly non-ethnic rural and urban White students, because marginalized ethnic Whites often are ridiculed and stigmatized; yet, as Heilman (2004) has asserted, "They cling to Whiteness, reject solidarity with other marginalized groups and accept their marginalized status with the sole consolation that they are not black" (p. 72). Through alienation, unrecognized marginality, and the failure to address how social and economic injustice functions, some marginalized Whites can be susceptible to "fascist white supremacist ideology" instead of the promotion of solidarity and social action (Heilman, 2004, p. 77). However, promoting such unity between marginalized groups of all races requires that educators, researchers, and policy makers be aware of "the complexity, and the dangers of reifying racist categories" (Heilman, 2004, p. 77). Even among liberal scholars that support multicultural education, denigration of rural characteristics is viewed as acceptable and "progressive" in many cases (Heilman, 2004, p. 77). Because of the cultural stereotypes of poor rural Whites as racist and violent, these individuals often are viewed as unsympathetic; thus, their needs either go ignored or unrecognized (Heilman, 2004). Heilman (2004) has suggested, "Without explicit curriculum that

addresses the historical experiences, local culture, language, dialect, learning styles, school experiences, and even popular cultural representations of marginalized ethnic White students, pre-service teachers can easily transmit cultural and social class bias and are at risk of neglecting or misinterpreting the needs of many students" (p .76).

With negative stereotypes of the rural South also came the romanticized perspective in the media of the rural South as past places fondly remembered as the home of "lazy, simpleminded, provincial, country-folk" (Schramm-Pate, 2002, p. 22). This is different from the findings of recent research studies, which have found "parents and guardians who not only worry about the quality of their schools but expect the schools to educate their children for the future, wherever that may lead—city or farm, nearby or faraway" (Schramm-Pate, 2002, pp. 22-23).

Thus, the negative stereotypes that may negatively affect rural students if internalized might be addressed through a critical pedagogy of place. However, as previously described, interrogating the historical and socio-political forces that create and sustain these negative messages necessitates a rethinking of curricula and the involvement of multiple educational stakeholders within the process. As the research on rural culture has shown, community engagement is a common characteristic of the rural population; therefore, the utilization of school-university-community collaborations seems to be a method for addressing the issues that impact all of a community's students.

CHAPTER V

LITERATURE ON EDUCATIONAL COLLABORATIONS

Developing a critical pedagogy of place (or critical rurban pedagogy) through the analysis of narratives and curriculum documents requires an awareness of hegemony that exists in the valuing of that which is urban and marginalizing that which is rural. Providing a balance between the honor and critique of rural traditions that might allow rural students to connect with the curricula present in urbanized schools while also being prepared for a constantly-changing society is a challenging process, because it requires reconceptualizing approaches to curriculum and instruction. However, the likelihood of developing curriculum that attends to community values and traditions along with the necessities of an increasingly global society seems greater through the combined efforts and expertise of members of schools, institutions of higher education (IHEs), and communities, or what Hatfield (2002) calls the "triadic support system" (p. 20). Christenson, Johnston, and Norris (2001) have suggested that rural communities make ideal settings for these collaborations due to smaller numbers of people, established relationships, less bureaucracy, definable issues, sense of place, and opportunity for changes that have mutual benefits for all. Sher (1989) has cautioned that educators should take seriously the power of education and not fall back on the fact that teachers have too many responsibilities; avoid trivializing the power of education by putting the blame on "at-risk students," indicating a "condemned future;" and demonstrate a commitment to

change the situation. Sher (1989) has made the point that rural decline is not inevitable as long as educators try to do something to change it, including participating in school-university-community partnerships that build the education system from the communities in which they operate.

While moving toward action research and curricular reform that involves local schools, the local university, and the community is an intended future outcome of a larger research agenda that is initiated with this study, it is useful to consider (even at this early stage in the proposed curricular reform effort) some of the strengths, challenges, and history of school-university-community collaborations. Recognizing what the literature on these collaborations suggests about their potential may help to guide considerations for how the information obtained from this study might be helpful to the participating communities in the future. First, it is important to gain an understanding of what is meant by "collaboration" in this context.

Definition of School-University-Community Collaboration

The term collaboration is often associated with multiple people or groups working together on a task. However, as part of a school-university-community partnership, a much more *active* definition of the term is required. According to Osguthorpe, Harris, Black, Cutler, and Harris (1995), collaboration, as part of a school-university-community partnership, may be defined as:

> …an active, directed form of cooperation that is motivated from within the participating individuals and groups. This type of collaboration can occur only after people connect with ideas, form relationships based upon equity and trust, and develop commitment to shared goals. (p. 7)

Corrigan (2000) has shared this perspective that collaboration is a high-order activity, with an expectation that "the new collaborative entity produces something that individuals or organizations could not produce alone" (p. 177). In meeting the needs of students, Corrigan (2000) has advocated for a family-centered, interagency approach that requires time and trust-building and integrates education, health, and human services. Through an integrated approach, the purpose of education may be redefined, which Goodlad (1988) has determined to be one of the broader goals of collaboration:

> What we need is a reaffirmation and, probably, a redefinition of the role of education in a democracy, with particular attention to what is required for successful enculturation of the young; a much clearer delineation of the desired function of schools in this process; a clear articulation of the goals, substance, length and breadth of the schooling deemed necessary; and a fresh commitment to both excellence and equity and how these can be forwarded simultaneously. (p. 9)

Aside from occasional conference attendance, in-house professional development, and/or the taking of university courses at one's individual expense, teachers and administrators are not regularly privy to the latest research and best practices in education (Goodlad, 1988). While university faculty participate in research and publication of the newest trends, practices, policies, and issues in education, teachers and administrators, busy in the day-to-day practice of "teaching" and "managing," often do not keep up with the latest research. In other words, while information is available, it is not being accessed regularly. This implies that greater collaboration between school-, university-, and community-stakeholders (i.e., teachers and faculty, administrators, parents and community members, etc.) needs to occur in a sustained and frequent manner.

Too often in educational reform efforts, attempts are made to improve the quality of the individuals responsible for teaching young people and leading our schools. Efforts to attract "higher quality" teachers and administrators seem like an "easy fix" to the low-quality education offered in some of the nation's schools. However, Smith (2009) has contended that the preparation of educators in the US continues to improve, with half of the public school teachers having advanced degrees. This suggests that the problem "lies deeply embedded in the structure of institutions and, therefore, is structural and bureaucratic in character" (Goodlad, 1988, p. 11).

Smith (2009) also has challenged that we must trust the value system of our educators, which cannot be directly translated to other professions:

> No matter how successful a strategy might be in business or any other professional domain, and no matter how logical that initiative might seem to lawmakers, it will not succeed in education if it doesn't account for the primary reason why people choose to teach: to make a difference in the lives of children. (p. 174)

Thus, focusing on individual reform efforts does not do enough to change the underlying issues present within the educational system. This may be one reason why educational reform efforts throughout the years have offered the same recommendations but have yielded few sustained results (Su, 1986).

Clark's (1988) research on school-university collaboration has demonstrated that stakeholders often enter into a "network," where ideas and information are exchanged but where change does not occur necessarily by design (p. 13). Because schools and universities share a common purpose and goal, it seems more valuable for these

educational institutions to form "partnerships" (i.e., collaboration) designed to engage one another in a joint process of change. Also, because families and communities will be called upon to sustain these change efforts outside of school, they should be involved in this network as well (Corrigan, 2000).

For purposes of this study, collaboration will refer to equitable partnerships between K-12 public schools (teachers, staff, and administrators), IHEs (faculty within DPI-approved education programs), and community members (parents and others with a vested interest in the education of the communities' citizens).

Benefits of School-University-Community Collaboration

Though school-university-community collaborations take a combined and sustained effort that often requires much time and reevaluation, each party (schools, IHEs, and communities) brings different expertise to a collaboration, which strengthens the opportunity for new ideas and an inclusive vision. With the challenge of introducing and maintaining change and progress, these collaborations also offer necessary emotional, financial, and resource support (Trubowitz & Longo, 1997). As educational institutions face threats from the outside, especially in regards to financial resources, collaboration becomes a way of strengthening the status of these institutions (Clark, 1988).

Knowledge of the unsteady history between schools and postsecondary institutions demonstrates that collaboration based on a hierarchy of university personnel as experts and school personnel as those needing to be educated is ineffective and problematic. In order to create sustained change and improvement in the schools, an

equitable partnership between universities, schools, and parents is necessary. As active participants throughout the critical years of cognitive, social, emotional, and behavioral development, K-12 schools and IHEs are engaged in a shared purpose of supporting and enhancing this development. As participants serving similar functions, schools and postsecondary institutions can serve to support one another as resources and as team members simultaneously giving and receiving knowledge and support (Laferrière et al., 2008).

This sharing of expertise and new ideas for teaching and learning can "create dynamic communities of practice as [individuals] share, debate, collaborate, and build better contexts for [their] students" (Christenson et al., 2001, p. 7). In these new communities, teachers, faculty, and community members learn (or are reminded) of the pressures experienced by the other, while also learning to better articulate their theories and practices (Christenson et al., 2001). This exchange of knowledge and action toward change can prevent the methods of schools and universities from becoming outdated (Clark, 1988). Additionally, examples of school-university collaborations at various levels (elementary, middle, and high school), demonstrate that effective collaboration can reenergize university faculty's passion for teaching and increase access to resources for K-12 students and teachers (Christenson et al., 2001). However, in order to reap the benefits of these collaborations, certain challenges must be overcome.

Challenges of School-University-Community Collaboration

Though many schools and IHEs attempt to participate in collaborations for school reform, Trubowitz and Longo (1997) have suggested that these well-intentioned collaborations often falter once the groups move from discussion to implementation. It is at this point when the different perspectives regarding the teaching and learning process become evident (Trubowitz & Longo, 1997). Houck and Nakai (2004), reviewing a variety of research on school-postsecondary collaborations, defined these philosophical differences between educators in K-12 and those in higher education:

- K-12: Practical, didactic, collaboration, activity, rapid change, schedules are regulated, practice;
- Higher Education: Theoretical, constructivist, academic freedom, reflectivity, slow to change, flexible schedules, research. (p.3)

The philosophical differences between the universities as participants in scientific inquiry and the schools as developers of children sometimes can lead to stereotypes that perpetuate distrust among parties (Mitchell & Torres, 1998). According to Christenson et al. (2001), differences in school and university cultures can create conflicting ideologies and the establishment of stereotypes of one another. An example of a stereotype of university personnel is that they "live in ivory towers and can only spout theories," while school personnel are "wedded to practice and see theories as irrelevant" (Christenson et al., 2001, p. 6). These stereotypes can present challenges to collaboration, but realistic differences in demands do exist, which can create difficulties in communication and goal-setting. These cultural differences include university demands for research and service

and the debating of differences. Teachers, on the other hand, are faced with pressures in regards to test scores and parents and a sense of collegiality over debate.

From their years of experience with school-postsecondary collaborations, Trubowitz and Longo (1997) have identified additional challenges for these collaborations, including differences in the concept of time (with college faculty and staff having more flexible hours than school employees) and differences in reward systems (with no tenure incentives offered to college faculty for their collaborations with schools). Corrigan (2000) has noted that differences in governance and organizational structure, financing and resource allocation, "projectitis" (p. 186), information sharing (i.e., issues of confidentiality), turf battles, accreditation and licensing, and class conflict also may create barriers to effective collaboration. Likewise, efforts to sustain collaboration require that participants challenge long-held beliefs about teaching and learning; overcome cultural clashes and the bureaucracy of schools and teacher education programs; live with ambiguity and be wary of quick-fix solutions; avoid under- and over-structuring the process; balance process with substance/outcome; and lead for empowerment, shared responsibility, and commitment (Goodlad, 1995; Heckman & Mantle-Bromley, 2004). Through experience in both K-12 and postsecondary settings, Trubowitz and Longo (1997) also have noted the following truth that needs to be overcome in order to experience any sustained progress and change: "Schools pursue progress while attempting to avoid any real change, while the colleges pursue change without attempting to determine whether it leads to any real progress" (Trubowitz & Longo, 1997, p. 32).

In addition to the challenges of differing philosophies, organization, and personal and professional requirements and needs, Saleem and Tyson (1997), two African-American women who participated in a professional development school designed to impact educational change through collaboration, have recognized that additional challenges are present for collaborative participants who are not a part of the dominant culture. While they appreciated having a voice in decision-making, as two of a small number of "minority participants" in the collaboration, they noted that their perspectives could be overlooked by the "majority views" (Saleem & Tyson, 1997, p. 83).

In order to participate in these types of collaborations, time is essential. Saleem and Tyson (1997) have acknowledged that this type of time is a privilege seldom afforded to members of the non-privileged class. They also recognize that the cultural differences in the meaning of community may lead to misunderstandings and differences in these types of interactions. Saleem has suggested that the African-American community frequently collaborates in a system of power differences that are still viewed as equal (Saleem & Tyson, 1997). While someone may take on a leadership role, this person is still viewed as an equal in the collaboration. In Saleem's experience with school-postsecondary collaborations, the need for "equal" power sometimes prevents people from taking on a traditional "leadership" role, which may be necessary for organization and guidance (Saleem & Tyson, 1997).

In order to improve these collaborations, Saleem and Tyson (1997) have recommended that all voices need to be represented in the collaboration and that the collaboration should be defined with clear expectations agreed upon by all involved.

They also have warned against too much collaboration without moving toward implementation, with the students—for whom the collaboration was created—sometimes forgotten in the process. This sense of urgency among the non-privileged cohorts may end up lost among the privileged participants if the group does not remain conscious of considerations of diversity. Thus, parents/guardians, teachers, and administrators of diverse backgrounds and perspectives (all of whom have a larger stake in educational outcomes than policy makers) need to be included in collaborative efforts to combat the potential view of not having "any level of control and authority," "benefiting from the reform," and being "full and equal partners in the decision making process" (Schramm-Pate, 2002, p. 37). If these diverse perspectives are not included, then these stakeholders are more likely to express their frustration through resistance to power, which can negatively impact the students (Schramm-Pate, 2002).

Participant Disconnect

While there are many benefits of collaboration, including monetary benefits and resources, protection of relevance, and psychological advantages, the challenge of getting past initial skepticism and distrust is one of the major barriers to effective collaboration and educational reform. Additionally, collaborative efforts may be impeded by counterproductive attitudes that one party *knows* what is best for the other (Clark, 1988). In Goodlad's (1984) *A Study of Schooling*, he found that few changes in teaching practices have taken place in schools despite the research of university faculty. Schools and universities seem to operate as separate entities, serving a similar purpose of

"educating" by executing this practice in different, disconnected ways. According to Kirst (as cited in Venezia, Callan, Finney, Kirst, & Usdan, 2005):

> A profound organizational, political, and cultural chasm persists in most states between the governance systems of K–12 and higher education. The two sectors continue to operate in separate orbits and to live apart in separate professional worlds, associations, and networks… Within each state—and at the federal level as well—a division exists that is based on the historical and pervasive assumption that K–12 schools and colleges and universities should be guided by policies exclusive to each sector. As a result, the public policy "tools" that influence one sector—funding, accountability, and governance systems, for instance—have little in common with the policy tools that influence the other. Moreover, there are separate state boards of education for each level; separate legislative committees, and boards that coordinate one level (e.g., postsecondary education) without the other. (p. 2)

In order to address the issues plaguing educational institutions at all levels, it is important to identify the areas of disconnect and work toward unified resolution.

This process needs to extend to communities as well, since "children bring more than educational needs to the classroom," with "no single profession or institution [assuming] the full responsibility for creating the conditions that children need to flourish" (Corrigan, 2000, p. 179). Also, Corrigan (2000) has asserted that families must be involved and have ownership in order to sustain the efforts over time and incorporate the community's culture. While school may serve as a community hub, especially in rural communities, the school also should be involved in community activities in order to build mutual trust and commitment and to develop a shared culture in which schools and communities share responsibility for the students (Epstein, 2001; Lester, 2011; Patterson, Michelli, & Pacheco, 1999). One way to begin the process of bridging the disconnect

between schools, universities, and communities is to identify the perspectives that the various educational stakeholders have of one another in order to change false perceptions and address any small truths at the core of the disconnect between parties.

History of School-University-Community Collaboration

In order to understand the disconnect that has existed between schools and universities, it is important to recognize the unstable history of these educational collaborations in the US. By recognizing the challenges and shortcomings of past collaborations, future partnerships can hope to avoid the same negative fate of many of these joint ventures.

According to Clark (1988), in 1892, a committee chaired by the president of Harvard University, Charles Eliot, created a list of recommendations for improving education, which included the creation of a collaboration between school and university personnel. In making this recommendation, the committee recognized a need for increased attention on study and interpersonal skills, essential knowledge in a variety of disciplines, teaching that prepared *all* students for college, and improved teacher preparation. It was due to this early attempt at school-university collaboration that led to the creation of the College Entrance Examination Board, first suggested by Eliot in 1894. By the 1920's when the first Scholastic Aptitude Tests were being used by colleges to determine university admissions standards, the "collaboration" between university and school personnel had disintegrated into a hierarchy of experts (university personnel) dictating to the schools how the students should be prepared. This focus on the new testing methods versus traditional methods of preparation and assessment further divided

the two groups of educators until the 1930s when the Progressive Education Association allowed the secondary schools some autonomy by freeing them from some of the restrictions implemented by colleges and universities. As part of this autonomy, gains were made in the education of young people and the communication between schools and universities became more open and progressive. However, the onset of World War II distracted the nation from collaborative efforts in educational reform. (Clark, 1988).

After WWII, collaborative efforts reappeared due to the institution of the GI Bill, which required universities to view the preparation of students differently, since these students did not enter college immediately following secondary school. Additionally, the "baby boom" led to an increase in student enrollment and a corresponding expansion of public education. In order to properly educate these increasing numbers of public school and university students, collaboration between schools and universities became advantageous (Clark, 1988). While collaboration continued, though sometimes in differing forms (e.g., teacher centers), institutions of higher education took on a majority of the responsibility for training teachers, and the schools had "little to say about it and [were] rarely consulted" (Maeroff, 1983, p. 27).

Beginning in the 1960s, the focus of collaborative efforts shifted toward increasing the numbers of minority students enrolling at the undergraduate level (Haycock, 1998). This focus on access and equity continued into the late 1970s when debate regarding the building of a new middle school in Queens, New York resulted in combined efforts between the President of Queens College, Saul Cohen, and the Chancellor of the New York City Board of Education, Frank Macchiarola, to develop

"best practices" for the middle school designed to serve a racially and academically integrated school (Trubowitz & Longo, 1997, p. 15). As with attempted school-postsecondary collaborations in the past, the Queens College-Louis Armstrong Middle School collaboration faced challenges based on negative history between the two groups:

> Public school staff referred to college professors as wooly-headed theorists with no sense of reality about actual classrooms. College faculty warned of too intensive an involvement with the public schools and the rigid bureaucracy that dominated their operation. They pointed to innovative beginning teachers who are drawn into the morass of public school conservatism and whose energies are absorbed in survival rather than effective instruction. (Trubowitz & Longo, 1997, p. 15)

Much of the conflict and distrust between each party in the Queens College-Louis Armstrong Middle School collaboration was a product of differing educational philosophies, which is further compounded when community members, each with different perspectives and, potentially, different values are added to the fold.

Since this time, other waves of collaborative efforts have included attempts to improve teacher quality (focus in the 1980s) and concern with preparing students for the workplace (focus in the 1990s; Haycock, 1998). The focus of current educational collaborations seems to be to transform the education profession through efforts to make all educational professionals feel a part of the same role/profession (Haycock, 1998). Conspicuously absent from these collaborations are the families and community members, who also have a vested interest in the education of society's young people. Thus, if community members are not included in collaborative efforts and if lessons are not taken from historical attempts at collaboration for education reform, then schools,

universities, and communities might end up repeating the cycle of failed attempts at effective collaboration.

Structure of Effective Collaborations

History shows that, in order for any partnership to create lasting change, "a structure must be created in which all partners have equal status," and "equivalent representation...must be arranged" (Osguthorpe et al., 1995, p. 3). Since schools and the home are not mutually exclusive, any attempts to improve education should focus on how educational institutions may "wrap around" students and their families, taking into account the "multifaceted and interdependent needs" of the community by becoming "multidimensional" institutions (Lawson et al., 1995, p. 207). As Delgado-Gaitan (2001) has asserted, the following guidelines for building an authentic partnership through empowerment should be considered:

> (1) A truly democratic society is organized to provide all people of diverse backgrounds choices and opportunities to exercise their power; (2) all individuals have strengths, and cultural change should emanate from that position; (3) an understanding of the history of a given community or group…are indispensable in determining appropriate strategies for involving people in learning; (4) learning new roles provides people with access to resources, and the learning of those roles occurs through the use of those new resources; and (5) collective critical reflection is an integral process to participation and empowerment because it helps bring concerns to a conscious level. (p. 139)

Thus, in preparing a structure for any school-university-collaboration, the collaboration should consist of three minimum essentials: shared concept, purposes, and agenda (Goodlad, 1988). Goodlad (1988) has defined the essential concept of a school-university partnership as:

> ...a planned effort to establish a formal, mutually beneficial, interinstitutional relationship characterized by sufficient commitment to the effective fulfillment of overlapping functions to warrant the inevitable loss of some present control and authority on the part of the institution currently claiming dominant interest. (pp. 25-26)

With a shared concept, a shared purpose, then, may be defined as "the intent to create a process and an accompanying structure through which each *equal* party to a collaborative agreement will seek to draw on the complementary strengths of the other *equal* parties in advancing its self-interests" (Goodlad, 1988, p. 26).

The first step toward developing a shared purpose might be identifying a common vision. Based on a review of effective rural school-community collaborations, Chance (1999) has recommended a five-step procedure toward building a shared vision for developing a greater sense of community:

> (1) development and clarification of a personal vision by school district leaders; (2) development of an overall organizational vision through the involvement of community leaders, parents and nonparents, teachers, staff members, board members, administrators, students, and even those in the community who are educational critics; (3) determine how to communicate the vision; (4) determine how to actualize the vision; and (5) determine how to sustain the vision process. (pp. 234-235).

Chance (1999) has suggested that school district leaders and other educational stakeholders may not agree on everything, but in identifying commonly-held beliefs and values, a school-community collaboration might begin to develop a greater sense of shared community. In the identification of personal vision by superintendents, central office personnel, building administrators, board members, and teachers, individuals might

articulate the vision for their roles in a greater community. Then, by involving community leaders, parents and nonparents, staff members, and students, small groups can work toward consensus-building in regards to district strengths and weaknesses, focus, and community support and concerns. Once consensus is reached in these small groups, representatives from these school-community groups join together to, again, work toward consensus. This process continues until consensus is reached by all representatives or participants. The shared concerns and values, then, become the priority for the schools and community.

In the establishment of a shared vision, school-university-collaborations should work toward four primary collaborative goals, each focused on improving the educational experience for students: "(1) educator preparation, (2) professional development, (3) curriculum development, and (4) research and inquiry" (Osguthorpe et al., 1995, p. 5). Working toward these goals should occur within a symbiotic process in which each party contributes something that the other parties lack, with shared commitment and effort and "powerful contextual contingencies" (Goodlad, 1994, p. 104). According to Goodlad (1994), these "powerful contextual contingencies" are the rewards that are sufficient enough to offset "the inevitable burdens of a sustained relationship" (p. 104), which may include resources or status, for example. However, Goodlad (1994) has asserted that these rewards will never suffice if the collaboration participants are not deeply satisfied with the relationship itself. Thus, internal motivation from "continued progress toward a shared mission" (p. 104) is preferred. While trust-building is essential to this collaborative relationship, achievement of these shared goals also requires support from

school and district administration, time for collaboration, and a focus on students (as opposed to teacher education) at the center of the collaborative process (Christenson et al., 2001).

It is the last essential element of an effective partnership—agenda, or the steps in fulfilling the purposes—that, first, requires an understanding of a locale's rural culture through local narratives. By gaining an understanding of what constitutes the culture of rural students in urban counties, school-university-community collaborations might be able to develop culturally relevant curriculum, leading to professional development and teacher preparation that is inclusive of both the cultural awareness of urban and rural students.

Examples of Rural Collaborations

While no collaborative efforts have focused on the development of curriculum that is inclusive of rural culture within urban counties, some school-university-community collaborations have been established to better support rural communities. These collaborations include the Eastern N.C. Regional Science Center (known to the public (i.e., doing business as) Go-Science) and Project STEPE (Strengthening Teacher Effectiveness Through a Partnership of Equals).

Eastern N.C. Regional Science Center

Pitt County has been determined to be a transitional county by the former N.C. Rural Economic Development Center, Inc. (P. Woodie, personal communication, November 4, 2011) based on being a rural county with a large and growing urban population. Though supported as a rural county within NC, Pitt County still is faced with

the challenges of attending to both urban and rural issues. While East Carolina University (ECU) is located in the urban center of Pitt County—Greenville, NC—the bordering areas are rural, resulting in a necessity for the University to focus on both urban and rural culture. In an effort to attend to the needs of individuals in Eastern NC, collaboration between ECU and the K-12 schools has resulted in the development of the Eastern North Carolina Regional Science Center (doing business as Go-Science).

Go-Science is a non-profit, regional science center being developed in Greenville, NC, with the goal of increasing the mathematics and science literacy of the more than 600,000 residents of 19 Eastern N.C. counties (Go-Science, n.d.). Housing a planetarium, exhibit spaces, classrooms, the Challenger Learning Center (with mockups of Mission Control and a space station), a weather station, and the East Carolina Center for Science, Mathematics, and Technology Education (CSMTE), Go-Science has the following goals for the economic and cultural development of the region:

- Assist in the development of a math- and science- literate workforce;
- Demonstrate the relevance of science and technology in everyday living;
- Motivate and inspire students of all ages and all walks of life to pursue higher levels of scientific literacy;
- Educate teachers in science content, processes, and teaching technologies;
- Provide schools with exciting, hands-on, innovative, and relevant curriculum-based science programs; and
- Offer unique learning and entertainment opportunities to excite and stimulate students and other visitors. (Go-Science, n.d., p. 1)

Designed as a school-university partnership between ECU and the K-12 schools of Greenville, NC, the goals of Go-Science previously had been met through outreach

conducted by the ECU Department of Mathematics and Science Education and the CSMTE (James et al., 2006). As part of this partnership, departmental faculty have visited K-12 schools, modeling science and mathematics teaching using an inquiry approach, and provided professional development for current mathematics and science teachers (James et al., 2006). Efforts between the University and the schools also have included curriculum alignment and teacher recruitment and retention, with all initiatives focused on the needs of the constituent schools, many of whom lacked resources for such efforts (James et al., 2006). Recognizing the diversity of the region and the challenges of having "a large underserved population commingled with college educated residents" (James et al., 2006, p. 36), the Center has partnered with local businesses and community leaders (in addition to University personnel) in order to provide programming that reflects the culture and needs of the region.

While school-university-community collaboration has led to the development of Go-Science and the increased attention to the economic and cultural interests of rural Eastern NC, the collaboration focuses on science, mathematics, and technology, which means that opportunities for improvement in the humanities and non-technological forms of civic engagement remain unexplored. Additionally, while the K-12 schools have been partners in many initiatives developed by the Center, most of the professional development and curricular design efforts seem to have been initiated by the University, potentially resulting in a power differential that presents the University and the Center as resources for the K-12 schools without the schools being viewed as important resources for the University and the Center beyond serving as sources of data for research.

Project STEPE

Western Carolina University (WCU) is located in Cullowhee, NC in the rural county of Jackson. In collaboration with seven local school systems, two community colleges, parents, business leaders, and government officials, faculty in the WCU College of Education and Allied Professions (formerly the School of Education and Psychology) have sought to "strengthen teacher effectiveness by concentrating available local resources on the problems or issues identified by the participating school partners" (Chalker, 1992, p. 1). Project STEPE was conceived out of funding offered by DPI in 1989 for any K-12 schools that collaborated with universities in order to promote change to improve instruction (Chalker, 1992). According to Chalker (1992), the goal of improving how students learn should be at the center of school-university-community collaborations.

Through the expertise offered by the schools, university, and community members, Project STEPE has attempted to meet the following goals:

- To bring to bear on the complex task of strengthening teacher education the knowledge and experience of…teachers; school administrators and support personnel; community leaders; parents…; faculty members…; and members of other institutions serving youth in the area.
- To heighten the professional and lay communities' awareness of the region's rural educational problems and to sustain community wide interest and participation in the task of strengthening teacher education and teacher effectiveness.
- To identify and organize a competent cadre of professional and lay volunteers who are dedicated to improving teacher effectiveness.
- To make, through more effective coordination, maximum use of existing state-supported special centers and offices that have the capacity of helping to strengthen teacher education particularly in the rural setting of the STEPE schools. (Chalker, 1992, p. 6)

The STEPE office is located in an area public school, making the school the hub of this school-university-community collaboration. As Chalker (1992) has contended, "In rural North Carolina, people's thoughts about their community are rooted in the schools" (p. 8). Thus, due to the educational, social, cultural, and economic impact of schools on their communities, rural residents should be more involved in school decision-making (Chalker, 1992). Project STEPE involves a school committee, consisting of school personnel and community members, as well as a university committee with faculty appointed by the dean of the education program (Chalker, 1992). Discussion between these committees is facilitated by a project coordinator and project consultant (the only paid member of the collaboration), who serve on an action council called the Western Regional Council for the Improvement of Teacher Effectiveness (WRCITE), the managing body of Project STEPE (Chalker, 1992). According to Chalker (1992), university and school district leadership play a critical role in effective school-university-community collaborations; thus, their monthly participation in WRCITE is necessary in supporting strategies developed through the collaboration.

Through these collaborative efforts, the Project STEPE committees have identified key issues around motivation, morale, and communication and have developed the following strategies to address these key issues:

- A workshop to train elementary teachers in the use of hands-on science materials.
- A test interpretation workshop for K-12 teachers.
- Training for teachers in a workshop on cooperative learning.
- A workshop to train teachers in the use of multi-media in the classroom.
- A Democracy in Education workshop to encourage shared decision-making.

- A satellite television course on interactive video that hopefully will lead to cooperative interactive programming for the partners.
- A two day workshop for all instructional personnel in three of the LEA's [Local Education Agency] on skills to improve teaching on all levels in all disciplines. (Chalker, 1992, p. 12).

Additionally, K-12 representatives have reviewed the teacher education program at WCU to improve teacher training and develop strategies for involving parents in student learning, and efforts have been made to develop activities to help new teachers cope with unique problems (Chalker, 1992). The collaborative partners also have worked together to research delivery methods in the area schools as well as pilot initiatives within the districts (Chalker, 1992).

While staff development activities, shared decision-making, increased awareness of school issues within the community, and increased networks between school and university personnel and community leaders have been positive outcomes of Project STEPE, several shortcomings of the collaboration exist. While community members have an increased presence in school decision-making, business leaders, government officials, and parents are less active in the collaboration than initially anticipated (Chalker, 1992). Some teachers within Project STEPE schools also seem unaware of the opportunities offered by the collaboration (Chalker, 1992). Additionally, evaluation of the effectiveness of the collaboration in regards to student learning outcomes can be difficult to determine. Most disheartening of all is the fact that the project fails to exist in its original form due to the retirement of Donald Chalker, who spearheaded the collaborative initiative. Regardless of the challenges faced by the collaborative partners of Project STEPE, this

school-university-community collaboration demonstrates an effective alternative to school consolidation. These partnerships provide access to resources and support in addressing complex issues that may be lacking in smaller schools, "while still preserving the benefits of local community oriented schools" (Chalker, 1992, p. 15).

Stages of Effective Collaborations

While the aforementioned educational partnerships are examples of current, effective school-university-community collaborations, reaching the positive outcomes of these partnerships is not an overnight process. Trubowitz and Longo (1997) have identified general, though not static, stages through which groups tend to progress when developing effective school-postsecondary collaborations. The first stage, *hostility*, includes skepticism, as practicing teachers will inevitably question the postsecondary faculty members' knowledge of the current school climate as those removed from the day-to-day K-12 classroom setting (Trubowitz & Longo, 1997). This initial skepticism may be followed by *lack of trust,* which often is based on past individual and historical experience (Trubowitz & Longo, 1997). The lack of trust may be felt on the part of K-12 educators, who sometimes are faced with societal criticism and demands.

Through patience and increased dialogue, collaborators may then move into a *period of truce* (Trubowitz & Longo, 1997). During this stage, negativity dissipates and trust and respect continue to improve. All parties recognize their similar goals and common concerns and begin working toward addressing the similar issues. If trust and respect have been gained, then a stage of *mixed approval* often appears (Trubowitz & Longo, 1997). At this stage of collaborative development, a blending of roles tends to

occur, with school personnel taking on roles at the colleges and college faculty becoming an increased presence in the schools. As this increased collaboration becomes more present in the professional settings, the next stage, *acceptance*, occurs, with more stability evident (Trubowitz & Longo, 1997). It is at this stage when each party sees the benefits of the collaboration and begins to feel good about the process. While the fruits of the effort are being realized, inevitable changes that may negatively impact the collaboration also appear. During this *acceptance* stage, school and college personnel may move on to other positions or other schools, thus introducing unfamiliar people into the process (Trubowitz & Longo, 1997).

As movement of people in and out of the collaboration occurs, the collaborative process may move into the *regression* stage, during which time, vigor for the process subsides (Trubowitz & Longo, 1997). Commitment by new personnel may be lacking and reassessment may be necessary. By identifying new goals and possibly restructuring the organization of the collaboration, the partnership may move into a stage of *renewal* (Trubowitz & Longo, 1997). During this stage, positive changes may be maintained, while new goals and objectives may be met.

Once sufficient progress toward the mutual goals is achieved, *maintaining progress* becomes a key task of the collaboration (Trubowitz & Longo, 1997). In order to make sure that the involved parties do not become complacent, it may be necessary to bring in outside perspectives by inviting new personnel into the collaboration, blending old with new, and maintaining consistency while also revitalizing the efforts. With the renegotiation of goals with each turnover in collaborative personnel, it becomes

necessary to maintain influence by *avoiding marginalization* (Trubowitz & Longo, 1997). Too often, collaborative parties will maintain commitment to the project in a compromised manner, in which each party operates independently of one another. The danger in this comfort in independence is a loss of potential provided by the active collaboration between the two expert groups. In order to achieve the full potential of the collaboration, *reestablishing the mission* becomes the stage where the development is deepened (Trubowitz & Longo, 1997). This stage essentially involves a "revisioning," in which the collaborators revisit their philosophies, the achieved progress, and their future goals to determine a new path for change. While each collaboration will progress through the stages differently, collaborations most likely will progress through periods of highs and lows, with constant evaluation and compromise necessary for sustained progress.

In order to work toward a collaboration that seeks to attend to the cultural relevancy of curricula for rural students within an urban area and in which all participants trust one another (Trubowitz & Longo, 1997) by being viewed as equals (Osguthorpe et al., 1995) and having a shared purpose (Goodlad, 1988) and a common vision (Chance, 1999), the methodology for this study, which seeks to examine the rural culture of an urban area, attends to issues of equality and trust between the researcher and the participants.

CHAPTER VI

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Using a constructivist paradigm that recognizes the diversity of rural locales and cultural definitions, this study involves a case study of an urban county in Central North Carolina that has a significant rural population. According to Yin (2009), "case studies, like experiments, are generalizable to theoretical propositions and not to populations or universes," with a goal to "expand and generalize theories (analytic generalization)" (p. 15). Thus, through document analysis, surveys, semi-structured interviews, and generational narratives, this case study serves as the foundation for a larger research agenda that will include replication of this study in other regions of NC (the Coastal Plain and Mountain regions in addition to the Piedmont in Central NC). Such expansion of this study could serve to provide an understanding of cultural differences in the meaning of the "rural" experience throughout NC that is inclusive of diverse perspectives within the regions. By attending to how I obtained access to participants, how I respected cultural diversity, how I defined "ruralness" in interpretative analysis, and how I retained trustworthiness in data analysis, the methodology employed recognizes the experiences of the research participants, enabling their stories to inform the potential development of transformative curricula that allows students to both value and critique notions of "ruralness" in their experiences.

Yin (2009) has suggested that case study is preferred when asking *how* and *why* questions in situations where contemporary events cannot be controlled by the researcher. In this case, even though school-university-community collaborations have been established between various institutions of higher education (IHEs) and school districts throughout the state, few have attended to the unique needs of rural students within areas with a growing urban economy and university/college population. In order to begin to consider collaborative efforts for curricular reform (especially with the implementation of the new Common Core State Standards) that attends to the unique culture and needs of rural students in urban counties, this case study seeks to examine the following research questions:

- How might local definitions of rural culture be used to construct fruitful collaborations for curricular reform between schools, IHEs, and communities?
    - To what degree is rural culture included in curriculum development and implementation in this urban N.C. county?
    - What do the narratives of educational stakeholders (teachers, curriculum specialists, university faculty, community members, etc.) suggest about rural culture in this particular area of NC?

Answering these questions, informed by previous studies in rural and place-based education, necessitates personal expertise that can come only from those with a lived experience in the area. However, because of the diversity of perspectives in any community, data was collected through four methods: document analysis, surveys, semi-structured interviews, and generational narratives.

Description of Research Site

Site Selection

In order to identify potential participating districts, I used the database of school districts compiled by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). The choice to start with a case study in Central NC was based on the unique characteristics of this particular Central N.C. county as well as the time and travel constraints present for this study. This county was selected based on the presence of a DPI-approved teacher education program within the county as well as the presence of a significant percentage of rural schools within the urban county (i.e., 25% or more of the schools are designated as rural). Analysis of the population densities of the 2010 county Census tracts reveals the significant rural population within this urban county (Geographic Research, Inc., n.d.a). According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2010), "Census tracts are small, relatively permanent statistical subdivisions of a county" (para. 1), typically following natural or government boundaries that are delineated by local committees. Census tracts are used (as opposed to zip codes or other geographic markers), because Census tracts are the lowest and most detailed level of geography available for most of the U.S. Census data and because Census tracts change less often, reflecting the population of an area (as opposed to mail distribution in the case of zip codes; Florida Department of Public Health, 2010). *Figure 2* delineates the urban and rural Census tracts in this urban county (Geographic Research, Inc., n.d.a), using population densities of 250 people per square mile, and shows the locations of the K-12 public schools (NCES, 2011b) as well as all postsecondary educational institutions (i.e., a four-year university and a community

college's satellite campus; Infogroup, Inc., 2011). This map was created using Geographic Information System (GIS) software.

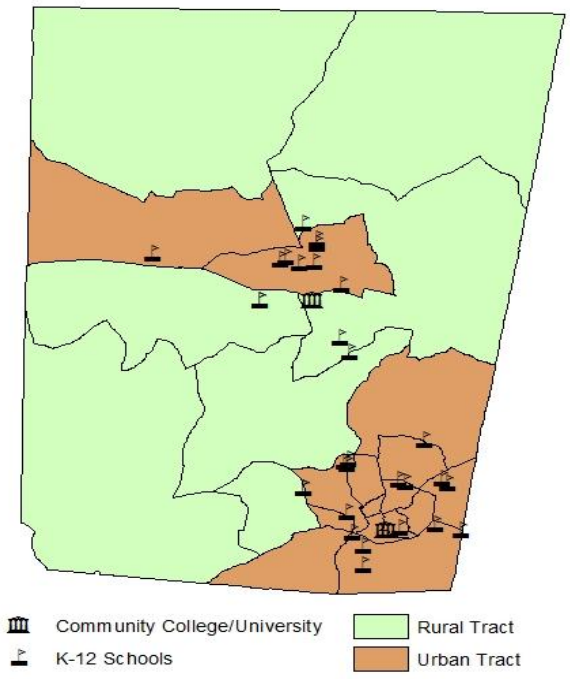

Figure 2. Map of Urban and Rural Census Tracts in an Urban, Central N.C. County. The figure includes the locations of K-12 public schools and postsecondary educational institutions (community college and university) in the county.

This researcher-created map reveals that most of the schools in this county are located within urban tracts, meaning that most of the students in the rural areas of the county have to travel to the urban areas to attend school. Not indicated in this map is the fact that this county is divided into the City School District (a suburban school district) in the southern part of the county and the County School District (a rural school district) in

the north (NCES, 2011a). The organization of the school districts within this urban county has implications for the education of rural students in both districts due to differences in culture, resource allocation, and proximity and access to services.

Also making this county an appropriate site for data collection was the fact that the County School District in this area has been involved in the process of developing curricula that aligns with the Common Core State Standards for over two years ("Stanley," personal communication, June 25, 2012). Unlike many districts, which may involve select educators, administrators, and curriculum specialists in the development of these aligned curricula, this district involved *all* teachers, administrators, and curriculum specialists in the process through a series of steps that involved introductory presentations by district office staff and the exploration of Common Core documents in Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) during the 2010-11 school year, two-day orientations for school-based curriculum teams during the summer of 2011, half-day curriculum meetings for all teachers at the start of the 2011 school year, curriculum mapping development by all teachers throughout the 2011-12 school year, curriculum mapping by subject and grade-level teams during the summer of 2012, and Common Core implementation and assessment by all teachers during the 2012-13 school year ("Stanley," personal communication, June 25, 2012). While community members and university faculty have not been involved in this process and while attention to cultural relevancy in the developed curricula has been limited to racial and ethnic considerations ("Stanley," personal communication, June 25, 2012), this district has laid the foundation for potential collaborative efforts between the schools, the community, and the local university to

further adapt this curricula to encompass the rural culture of some of the district's students.

Site Access

Because each school district has different requirements for research studies conducted within their schools, the district office of the selected rural school system in an urban county in Central NC was contacted for research permission after obtaining clearance from the IRB to conduct a pilot study (during the spring of 2012) designed to inform the development of the interview protocol. According to district policy, all research involving students or district employees must be cleared by the district office and then a location for the research is determined by the district office based on the types of participants needed. Based on my pilot research proposal, I was approved to conduct my research in a rural middle school in this urban county as designated by a district representative charged with overseeing research projects within the district.While this approval allowed me open access to potential participants in this school as well as district office representatives, it also limited the potential participant pool to one particular school setting.

Research setting. The rural middle school selected by the district office within the Central N.C. urban county was located in the largest town in the northern part (i.e., the rural part) of the county. The town serves as the county seat and has historical signficance within the region and state. According to the 2010 Census, the 6,087 people living in the city were comprised of 62.92% White, 29.46% Black, 7.2% International (those of any race born outside of the United States), 6.64% Latino (of any race), 3.25%

Biracial, 2.05% Multiracial, 1.66% Asian, 0.62% American Indian or Alaska Native, and 0.03% Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Native (Moonshadow Mobile, Inc., 2012; U.S. Census Bureau, 2013). The median household income of individuals living within the town limits was $52,411, with 24.7% of individuals living below the poverty level—more than the county as a whole (16.9%; U.S. Census Bureau, 2013). The education level (i.e., a bachelor's degree or higher) of people living in the town (41.5%) was significantly higher than that of the state average (26.5%) but signifcantly lower than the largest town in the southern part of the county (73.2%) and the average travel time to work for workers age 16 or older was 23.5 minutes, indicating that a significant number of residents work outside of the immediate area (U.S. Census Bureau, 2013). Of all individuals living in the town, approximately 16.69% were of school age (Moonshadow Mobile, Inc., 2012).

The middle school used as a research site within the town had a student population of 628 during the 2011-12 school year, with 81.5% and 86.4% of the students at or above grade level on the N.C. End-of-Grade tests in Reading and Mathematics, respectively (Public Schools of North Carolina, 2012b). Of the students in the school, 85.8% of the White students, 75% of the Multiracial students, 65.1% of the Latino students, 45% of the Black students, and 35.8% of the students with recognized disabilities passed both of the N.C. End-of-Grade tests (i.e., Reading and Mathematics) during the 2011-12 school year, with most student groups (all but Black students) outperforming the state averages (Public Schools of North Carolina, 2012b).

The academic performance of the students at the school (as measured by the state of North Carolina) has steadily improved over the years as has access to technology as the school upgraded from having more students per Internet-connected digital learning device (4.76) than the district (2.02) and state averages (1.79) to being a one-to-one laptop school, whereby each student has access to this technology (Public Schools of North Carolina, 2012b). While access to the technology itself has improved, the interviews in the later chapters show that the teachers at this school still have questions about access to the infrastructure required to use this technology away from school within the more rural parts of the county.

Participant Access

After obtaining district-office approval to begin my research within the district, I met with the school principal to review my research and discuss procedures for the pilot study (interviews) and additional data collection. The school administrator was highly interested in the outcome of this research; thus, she was supportive of finding time and space for me to interview teachers at this school. A space was established for me in the multimedia room of the school's media center, and a research summary was provided in the mailboxes of each teacher. Through this convenience sampling, three teachers then contacted me by email or through the school principal to schedule pilot interviews during their planning times throughout March of 2012. Additionally, one community member, who had heard about the study, contacted me personally to volunteer for pilot interview participation. Participants were informed of the purpose of the study and the use of an

audio recording device, and written consent was obtained. Participants also were notified of their rights to quit the study and to receive the results of the study upon its conclusion.

After participation in the pilot study, all four participants indicated a willingness to participate in follow-up as part of the full study; and one additional teacher from the school, two curriculum specialists within the district office, and one university faculty member from the county's teacher education program volunteered to participate in the interview process after hearing about the pilot study through the pilot participants and colleagues in the field. In a study of recruitment issues in rural schools, Berry, Petrin, Gravelle, and Farmer (2011) have identified the need for the training offered in teacher preparation programs to align with the types of training needed by rural teachers. Thus, I decided to include a university faculty member from the selected county's local teacher education program in my group of interviewed educational stakeholders. In addition to identifying potential research participants, the pilot study resulted in the generation of a protocol for the semi-structured interviews.

While the district-approval process narrowed the pool of potential survey participants and the pilot study identified potential inteview participants, the identification of potential generational narrative participants was the result of snowball sampling that began with the pilot interview of a community member in this county. After being informed of the proposed methodology, this community member identified his great, great aunt as a life-long member of the community, who might be willing to provide a narrative of her experiences living and working in the area. After meeting with this 98-year-old individual and asking her family members for referrals to others of

different generations who have spent their lives in the area, I was put in contact with an individual in her 60s, an individual in her 40s, and an individual in her 20s who have lived and worked in the area but who grew up in different parts of the county within different family circumstances.

Participant descriptions. Because the interview participants were recruited from a school site assigned by the district office, all of the teachers that participated in the semi-structured interviews were middle school teachers at a rural middle school in an urban county in Central NC. The community member that participated in this study also had a previous affiliation with this middle school as both a student and a professional that worked with students from this school. Both curriculum specialists worked in the district office and provided training for teachers in this middle school, and the university faculty member in the nearby teacher education program had past experience as a teacher and administrator in this district and has supervised pre-service teachers in this district as part of her role at the university. While each participant that provided a narrative had experience growing up in the county, each individual narrative included a different span of time in the county and reflected experiences that ranged from those of a person living in the town to those of a person living on the rural fringes of the county.

All 12 participants were asked to share a narrative of their lives, including the eight semi-structured interview participants, who shared this information at the beginning of the interviews. The following descriptions of each participant are based on these narratives as well as some of the details provided by the participants throughout the

interview process. Each name is a pseudonym selected by the participant unless the participant preferred that I develop the pseudonym.

James. James is a middle-aged African-American man, who has taught at this particular middle school for approximately seven years, having taken a year away from the school but then returning to his post as a seventh grade science teacher. James was a lateral entry teacher, getting his teaching license years after graduating with an undergraduate degree in biology. He is in the process of working on his doctorate degree in education.

James grew up with a Baptist upbringing in a rural county in NC and attended school during the institution of desegregation. He was largely raised by his grandparents as his parents moved back and forth to the urban setting for work. According to James, "We moved around just like a lot of Black families back in those days; we were very transitory. And, we moved from the country to the city, from the country to the city several times, but I spent most of my time in the country, in the rural setting." James also had the support of teachers, who encouraged his continued education despite not being labeled gifted as students are currently. With this nurturing, he worked as a businessman for many years following his graduation from college, seeking a job in teaching after a potential heat stroke led him to think that this was a message to be there for his son. James still situates himself as someone who is "more country at heart" and who identifies with "Black rural" culture.

Max. Max is a middle-aged Jewish woman, who has taught at this particular middle school for at least ten years.

Max grew up in a Jewish-Italian neighborhood in New York during the 1940s and 1950s, across town from the Latino-African-American neighborhood. Moving to NC, Max found that the racial mixing that she witnessed in the south did not "compute with [her] Yankee brain." With the cultural mixing that Max has observed in the south, she finds it more and more difficult to define students' cultural experiences and backgrounds. Max locates her upbringing as urban but suggests that she rejects many of the urban values, including the acquisition of goods as an indicator of success, that were portrayed by her family and others. Instead, she aligns with the values of hard work and earning one's way.

Betty's Girl. Betty's Girl is a middle-aged White woman, who has taught at this particular middle school for about seven years. Betty's Girl has been in teaching for most of her adult life, with the exception of the time off that she took to raise her children. She chose her pseudonym as a way to honor her mother.

Betty's Girl grew up in a Christian household as the oldest of five girls to two parents of meager beginnings. Both parents placed a value on education, encouraging the girls to attend college, which all but one did. Because teaching and nursing were the careers to which women were often directed, and because Betty's Girl did not like blood, she became a teacher. Her extended family in urban Kentucky was very large, but her three children grew up with a small family, thus making family of their friends. Betty's Girl strongly prefers the urban experience and feels like she does not fit in within the rural setting, only moving to rural NC because of her husband's romanticizing about his childhood experiences visiting family in the rural Midwest.

Barbara. Barbara is a middle-age White woman, who has been teaching for 14 years and who has taught Exceptional Children in the district since moving to the area after college.

Barbara grew up in a rural county further west in NC and appreciates the rural way of life. However, unlike the schools of her hometown district, which were very large, Barbara likes the small community feel of her current district's schools as well as the diverse backgrounds and perspectives of the area's citizens.

Stanley. Stanley is a middle-age White man, who moved to North Carolina almost 10 years ago to work with the Department of Public Instruction. He then moved to this district to become the Director of Secondary Instruction, a role that he held for six years (during the time of data collection), prior to becoming the principal of an elementary school in the district during the 2012-13 academic year. In his role as the Director of Secondary Instruction, Stanley provided curriculum leadership and professional development for grades 6 through 12 in the district and guided the development of the district's first online curriculum maps around the Common Core State Standards.

Valerie. Valerie is a middle-age White woman, who taught in the district before becoming the Director of AIG (Academically and Intellectually Gifted), Literacy, and Professional Development for the district. Because of the resources available to her through the local university, Valerie has collaborated with faculty and students at the university to bring research-based instructional practices to the district's teachers. Valerie's children attend school in the district, and she feels strongly about the district's efforts to be inclusive of all types of learners in its professional development.

Megan. Megan is a middle-age Black woman, who taught in the district for eight years before serving as a mentor for beginning teachers and literacy tutor in the district. After receiving her degree in administration (from the university located in the southern, more urban part of the county), she became an elementary school principal in the district and stayed in this role for four years before joining the local university's Teacher Education program as a liaison between the university and partner schools. Some pre-service teachers within the program receive a fellowship focused on teaching in rural areas, which has involved field placements within the northern part of the county in the school district where she used to teach and serve as an administrator.

Carl. Carl is a White man in his mid-thirties, who has lived and worked (as a court counselor and psychotherapist) in the area since his birth. He received his K-12 education in the more rural area of the county (northern part of the county) and attended college and graduate school at the university in the southern (more urban) part of the county.

Carl's family history in the area dates back to at least the early 1800s, with his grandparents working as mill workers and farmers in the town. Thus, he and his family have seen the area change from mostly rural to increasingly suburban. Despite his "blue collar" upbringing and the expectations to work in the family business, Carl went into higher education and entered work within the helping professions. He locates himself as someone who still values the rural tenants and experiences of his youth but who has moved "more towards the urban values, or the suburban values, through education and

through post-graduate kind of work." Carl said that he is now more open-minded and respects "both ends of the spectrum."

Maureen. Maureen is a white woman in her late 90s, who has lived and worked in the area since her birth, growing up on a mountain in the town that is now a state park. She grew up the daughter of an unemployed father and mill-working mother, living in mill housing in the western part of the town. As a child, she was responsible for looking after her siblings and quit school after the third grade, against her mother's wishes, to help out around the house. At age 17, Maureen decided to work in the mill like her mother and did so almost 46 years before retiring.

Due to age, Maureen lives in an assisted living facility in the town but receives regular visits from her nephews, nieces, great-nephews, great-great-nephews and nieces, friends, and her only living sibling—the youngest, who is now 88 years old. Her family and a health care worker take her to her home—still in the old mill area, which has been repurposed as an area of food and entertainment—on a weekly basis, and she often shares stories about her past experiences (as her memory will allow).

Sally. Sally is a White woman in her early 60s, who grew up in a rural part of the county north of the town. During her childhood years, Sally attended school in a community school in her rural community until the seventh grade when she was transferred to a consolidated junior high in town. Going from a small community school, which included two grades per classroom, to a large consolidated school in the more urban part of the northern half of the county presented challenges as Sally's classes lacked other students from her part of the county, leaving her feeling like an outsider.

Sally grew up with three siblings with a tobacco farmer, turned Air Force service member, turned dry cleaning business owner, turned insurance salesman father and stay-at-home mother, turned dry cleaning business worker (with her husband). Sally's family lived in a house on family land in a rural part of the county before moving in with her elderly, paternal grandfather after the passing of her paternal grandmother. Sally's family was socially isolated by distance and lack of transportation (their one car was used by her father to get to and from work in town); thus, the rural community (Methodist) church and the local semi-professional baseball team were sites of recreation and socialization for the family.

Jan. Jan is a White woman, who just entered her 40s and who grew up in the rural fringes of the county, bordering another more rural county to the north. She attended school in the town as the students from the rural parts of the county were bussed into town to attend school. This differed from her father's experience growing up in the county before the time of school consolidation. During that time, the students in the more rural parts of the county attended school in their immediate area outside of town.

Jan spent her childhood helping on the family farm and assisting other farmers in the area, appreciating how everyone in the rural area supported one another and looked out for those in need. She moved into town after marriage and missed the pace of rural life but now lives with her husband and children on rural land owned by her parents near where she was raised. Jan commutes into the southern, more urban, part of the county for work, which requires careful planning for tasks such as grocery shopping and getting her children to and from school and extracurricular activities.

Courtney. Courtney is a twenty-two-year-old, White, female, first-year teacher at one of the high schools in the district. She grew up in a rural part of the county and attended school at the newer of the two high schools in the district (not the school where she currently teaches). Courtney's father was a plumber and her mother was a stay-at-home mom, who valued family closeness. Her extended family lives close by, and while Courtney currently lives outside of the county (in another rural area in an urban county that she considers similar to her home county), she and her husband are looking at ways to return to the area.

Courtney has noticed some changes to the area in terms of a growing population, growing economy, and changing environments but still appreciates the close-knit feel of the community and the citizens' pride and care of their neighborhoods and schools.

Each interview and narrative participant provided unique perspective of the community and the area's schools based on their personal experiences and frames of reference during their childhood and retrospective reflection. By first analyzing the geographic information of the selected counties and curriculum documents developed by district educators and then conducting a pilot study to investigate an appropriate interview protocol, survey and interview questions that relate to both the unique characteristics of the county/region and the common features of the rural experience (based on a review of the literature) were developed. By using semi-structured interviews and narratives of the educational stakeholders living in this county (minors were excluded due to limitations in obtaining gaurdian consent for participation), a clearer picture of the unique culture and needs of the rural students living in this urban county was gleaned to

help inform the co-construction of culturally relevant curricula and productive partnerships among school districts, IHEs, and community members.

Methods of Data Collection

Document Analysis

In order to foreground the purpose of the study for survey, interview, and generational narrative participants, I conducted a document analysis of CCSS-aligned curriculum documents developed by the teachers in the district. Just as Shepherd and Salembier (2011) have utilized the review of policy documents and Pashiardis, Savvides, Lytra, and Angelidou (2011) have reviewed school documents "for the purpose of triangulating information obtained through the interviews" of educators in rural areas (Shepherd & Salembier, 2011, p. 5), this study included document analysis in order to determine whether or not local and rural cultures have been included in local curricula and, if not, where space may exsist for their inclusion. Having been granted access to the Google Drive site where all of the teacher-developed, Common Core-aligned curriculum-mapping documents are being stored, I was able to analyze these documents through line-by-line coding of the documents (n = 185 unique codes), followed by thematic organization of like codes using an Excel spreadsheet (n = 3 themes and 9 sub-themes), in order to identify the presense or lack of cultural relevancy (i.e., the places in the curricula where local and rural cultures are included or the places where the inclusion of local and rural cultures might be possible). I, then, used these thematic categories in the development of survey questions around local and rural cultures and curriculum.

Teacher Survey

Because the document analysis revealed a lack of attention to cultural relevancy but potential for its inclusion, teachers (n=38) at the approved research site (a rural middle school in the selected urban county) received an initial email and two follow-up emails informing them of the purpose of the study, ensuring them of the anonymity of the survey, requesting their participation in the study, and providing them with instructions and a timeline (two weeks) for completion of the *Rural Culture and Curriculum Survey*. To protect the participants from authority influence, the administration was asked to refrain from either encouraging or discouraging participation. Completion of the survey involved following a link to a web-based survey, the *Rural Culture and Curriculum Survey*, designed using SurveyMonkey.com for this study. The link ensured that participants could only complete the survey once. Out of the 38 teachers working at this rural middle school during the 2012-13 academic year, 14 (36.8%) of the teachers responded to the survey items. This response rate exceeded the response rates of other studies utilizing similar online surveys (Cook, Heath, & Thompson, 2000) with no participation incentive provided.

The survey participants responded to six items regarding culture, curriculum, and professional development. Demographic information was not obtained from survey participants, since the relevant restrictions on participation—being over age 18 and being a teacher in this rural school in an urban county—were accounted for in the participant recruitment process. Of the six survey items, one item included a scaling question in which participants selected the county's location on a rural-urban continuum that

included the following identifiers: “rural,” “rurban (rural and urban),” “suburban,” “urban,” and “does not fit in any category.” The other five items were open-ended questions with text boxes that asked participants to “define rural culture” in the county, “define culturally relevant curriculum,” “describe how attention to culture is included in the curricula” enacted at the school, “describe how attention to place (the unique culture, assets, and needs of the the local community) is included in the curricula” enacted at the school, and “describe how culture and place are included in the professional development offered” by the school district. After analyzing the survey responses for common themes (n = 5) per category through line-by-line coding (n = 70 unique codes) of the narrative responses, the interview protocol developed as the result of the pilot study were revised further.

Semi-Structured Interviews

In order to identify themes of meaning regarding rural culture in the selected county in Central NC, in-depth, semi-structured interviews were conducted. Based on a review of qualitative studies, approximately four long interviews (one with each teacher) and follow-up interviews with two of the four teachers and four long interviews with other educational stakeholders in the area (two curriculum specialists, one faculty member from the area university’s teacher education program, and one community member), for a total of 10 interviews (with eight participants) of approximately 60 to 90 minutes in length each, were used (Creswell, 1998; Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006). Analyzing a qualitative study that involved 60 interviews with West African women for data saturation and variability, Guest, Bunce, and Johnson (2006) have found that the

basic elements needed to determine metathemes were present after as few as six interviews and that saturation occurred at 12 interviews. In addition to the findings of Guest et al., Creswell (1998) has found that 10 long interviews provide adequate opportunity to identify metathemes. By identifying four types of educational stakeholders, representative of the area's schools, university, and community, 10 interviews (with eight participants) were used in order to gather enough information about recurring themes while preventing saturation.

Interview protocol. In order to obtain descriptions of the participants' perceptions of rural culture in their locale as well as the inclusion or exclusion of rural culture in the school setting, teachers at the selected school as well as district curriculum specialists, a university faculty member, and a community member identified following the pilot study were asked to participate in semi-structured interviews designed to encourage elaboration and support of their individual narratives. As with the solicitation for survey participation, the teachers (n=38) were contacted via email about signing up for an interview time throughout the spring and fall of 2012. Additionally, the final page of the *Rural Culture and Curriculum Survey* included information on participation in semi-structured interviews related to the survey's themes. Individuals (n=4) either reserved a spot on a printed sign-up sheet available in the teacher's workroom or contacted me directly to schedule an interview.

By using a semi-structured interview format conducted by a single researcher, I was able to create an interview structure designed to lead the discussions toward the identification of themes related to rural culture while allowing flexibility for rapport-

building and elaboration. As individuals with a vested interest in education, flexibility in interview protocol was intended to allow for the sharing of personal experiences and expertise that provide support for their individual narratives.

Like Shepherd and Salembier (2011), who have used a semi-structured interview protocol of 15 to 18 questions with a variety of educational stakeholders in their study on rural education, this study included 9 to 14 questions (some with multiple parts), depending on the stakeholder interviewed and the level of elaboration provided. During the semi-structured interview, I only asked questions when necessary to clarify participants' responses and to encourage elaboration. Efforts were made to prevent the influencing of responses of the participants. When each participant described his or her perceptions and when no further clarification or elaboration was needed, the interview was considered complete. In the two cases where additional information was needed to clarify or elaborate on information provided by the interview participants (n=2) during the initial interview, follow-up interviews were requested, conducted, and analyzed.

For the structured part of the interview, each participant was asked the following questions, which sought to include some of Hatfield's (2002) primary research dimensions to study rural school change (i.e., beliefs, intentions, contexts, institutions, controls, participants, communication, theory, and meta-disciplinary perspectives; p. 13):

1. Tell me your story (what makes you who you are).
2. *Culture can be difficult to define because it may be perceived differently by different people. This is one reason why your story (and those of others) can be helpful in finding common patterns or uniqueness.*

   a. What values and traditions do you think best represent the rural population in your county?
   b. What values and traditions do you think best represent the urban/suburban population in your county?
   c. Based on what you have just shared, what distinctions do you think exist between rural and urban culture in this area?

3. *One of the focuses of the Common Core and N.C. Essential Standards is ensuring that curriculum is culturally relevant for local students.*
   a. Where do opportunities exist to incorporate some of the local values and traditions that you described into current curricula?
   b. If you can think of an example of a lesson or unit that you have taught that incorporates any of the local values or traditions that you described, please describe this lesson/unit.

      [Potential variation for the community member: Based on your experiences in schools in this district, what opportunities exist to connect lessons to some of the values and traditions that you described?]

4. Please describe the types of professional development that you receive/offer around topics that might be particularly relevant to students and educators in this area.

   [Potential variation for the community member: I know you might not be familiar with what types of training current educators receive, but just based

on your experience as a community member, can you think of a particular training topic for educators that might be helpful in working with students and families in this area?]

5. What types of professional development that local educators do not currently receive might support educational professionals' work with local students and families?

   [Exclude for the community member.]

6. Thinking of your own experiences in the schools, what types of professional development might help to further your work with your students and area families?

   [Exclude for the community member.]

7. [If not already mentioned], please describe any professional development that you have had/offered around topics of…

   a. working with rural students and families.
   b. working with individuals impacted by poverty.

   [Exclude for the community member.]

8. [If not already addressed], given your descriptions of rural and urban culture in the area, where would you locate yourself?
9. Before we complete the interview, is there anything that you would like to add that you did not get a chance to discuss through the previous interview questions?

In addition to the previous questions, the curriculum specialists were asked the following questions specific to the curriculum development process that is currently underway:

10. Tell me about the curriculum development process.
11. Who was involved?
    a. How were these individuals identified?
    b. What other educational stakeholders (university faculty, community members, etc.) were consulted, if any?
12. What opportunities exist in these curricula to attend to local culture? Rural culture?
13. How much latitude will individual teachers have with these curricula?
14. What steps are in place to evaluate the effectiveness of these curricula?

These 60- to 90-minute interviews were recorded with an audio recorder and transcribed at a later time. Then, like Nelson (1983), who asked follow-up questions based on participants' initial interviews, a second interview was conducted with two participants as needed for increased elaboration or information.

Generational Narratives

In addition to gaining insights specific to educational stakeholders' current perceptions of local culture and the incorporation of local culture into school curricula, gaining perspectives on the changes to the area's culture over time also may provide valuable insights into the opportunities for incorporating local culture into the curricula. Because a study of this sort has not been conducted in this area, this type of narrative data

was not readily available. Based on a community member's participation in the pilot study, it became clear that at least this person had perceived great change in the area's culture over the last 35+ years. To gain additional insights on this shift in local culture, this pilot participant offered to recruit his great, great aunt to share her narrative as part of a generational analysis that attends to the cultural shifts of the area over the last 98 years. After meeting with this individual and receiving a referral from family members to another individual with life-long experience in the area, each subsequent narrative interview with an individual led to additional referrals for the generational narratives. By simply asking these four individuals to share their life stories and their experiences attending school in this county, identified themes provided insights into the prevailing characteristics of this community's culture as well as those cultural aspects that have changed over the years.

While the semi-structured interviews addressed Kvalsund and Hargreaves's (2009) *design category I*, as a single case study that may suggest "new insights, hypotheses and questions for larger scale investigation" (p. 145) to be addressed in the larger research agenda (*design category II*, which "includes cross-sectional studies of multiple cases," looking for patterns (p. 145)), the use of generational narratives provided the added "dimension of time to the study of single cases" (p. 145; *design category III* in the current study, and *design category IV* in the extended future study with multiple cases). By addressing these two design categories, this study sought to address the needed balance in rural education research between the *life-world perspective*, which "educates students to be creative, productive and morally educated individuals and community

members and to prepare them to be citizens living meaningful lives in local communities and regions," and the *system-world perspective,* which "pursue[s] national curricula designed typically to improve national competitiveness in international markets" that was identified by Kvalsund and Hargreaves (2009) in their extensive review of quantitative and qualitative educational research (p. 141).

Methods of Data Analysis

After completion of the document review, survey, semi-structured interviews, and generational narratives, the raw data as recorded for each participant and document was transcribed verbatim and stored via encrypted and password-protected computer files in order to protect the confidentiality of participants during data analysis. Using the methodology for phenomenological studies developed by Colaizzi (1978) and a combination of inductive analysis (for the majority of the interview data) and interpretive analysis (for the largely narrative sections of the data) identified by Hatch (2002), the following procedures were followed, with data explicated through a process of within-case and across-case analysis (Schultz, 2004):

1. The transcriptions of each interview were read in order to gain recognition of overarching sentiments and potential themes.
2. Specific statements related to rural culture, including specific values and traditions, were extracted as significant.
3. The meanings of each significant statement were formulated, keeping with the original description.

4. Themes were organized into larger thematic categories in order to identify the themes that were common to all participants' descriptions. These themes were related to the original descriptions and discrepancies were acknowledged.
5. Detailed descriptions of the themes were integrated with one another and with the evidence from previous studies and professional experience.
6. The descriptions were shared with the participants in order to ensure that the identified themes and descriptions validated the participants' experiences.

This process was completed through line-by-line coding (n = 1527 unique codes) of the printed transcripts, followed by thematic organization of the codes using an Excel spreadsheet. The themes were sorted, with like themes (n = 165) reorganized into broader thematic categories (n = 35). Once I was able to answer affirmatively to the following questions suggested by Hatch (2002), I concluded the analysis process by selecting the seven most common thematic categories for interpretation (four broad themes to serve as rurban complexities and three broad themes to serve as rural values): "Are all deviant cases and disconfirming data accounted for? Can the analysis be explained and justified? Can a complete story be told? Can the analysis be organized into coherent written findings?" (p. 150).

By employing these methods (document analysis, surveys, semi-structured interviews, and generational narratives), I was able to respect the cultural differences of the research participants. However, the purposeful use of an interpretivist/constructivist paradigm on methodology, of triangulation, and of narrative further helped attend to the individual variation in participants' perspectives.

Respect for Cultural Differences

Believing that meaning is co-constructed locally and specifically (Lincoln, Lynham, & Guba, 2011), the methodology for this study largely stems from an interpretivist/constructivist paradigm, where the meaning of local rural culture is co-created by the interview participants and me as the researcher. By interviewing stakeholders from varying roles and backgrounds (triangulation) and using member-checks after analyzing the data (coded interview transcriptions), I worked together with the participants to make meaning of their experiences.

Additionally, the use of narrative in data collection tapped into the oral traditions of the rural community. For example, Nelson (1983) has been able to connect with the long oral history of her participants' community by allowing the participants to "tell their stories in their own words" (p. 15), only using questions to ensure that all areas of interest to the researcher were covered. As Nelson (1983) has stated, "My findings, tentative though they are, emphasize the importance of oral history as a research tool. They should make one wary of drawing conclusions about the meaning of work from outside the framework of the workers themselves" (p. 19). Nelson (1983) has continued, "These divergent attitudes toward the work could not have been ascertained by looking at the occupation from the outside. To fully understand the meaning of work we have to ask the workers and let them speak for themselves" (p. 20).

The use of narratives also attended to issues of diversity and privilege in the research process. Casey (1998) has stated:

> A fundamental premise of most approaches to research is that narrative privileges language and culture in the meaning-making process (Tappan & Packer, 1991). Thus, focusing on narratives allows the diversity in rural areas not only to be recognized, but to be preserved in and throughout the research process. Perhaps more importantly, narrative and storytelling allow diverse voices to speak with the authority of their own experiences, thereby, helping us to hear and to see more clearly what might be unique to each place. (p. 9)

Because rural areas often are defined through deficit-based and urban-centric descriptions, with little focus on the actual experience of rural life, Casey (1998) has argued that "more careful and systematic studies of the relationships between rural schools and their communities" (p. 14) are needed. Additionally, definitions of "rural" need to be more authentic to the people that live in these locales, using "experience rather than stereotypes, characteristics rather than caricatures, qualities rather than quantities, and values rather than products" (Casey, 1998, p. 15). In reclaiming a sense of rural place and voice, research should focus on what it means to *be* rural rather than focusing on what rural means (Casey, 1998). Casey (1998) has noted that the importance of this redefinition of rural has more to do with a "social, spiritual, political and psychological identity that is distinctly rural" (p. 17) than a simple ideology or philosophy.

While such a perspective mostly ensured that I valued the stories of my participants and allowed them the space to share their perspectives in a non-threatening way, I also recognize that my experiences shaped the lens through which I interpreted these stories. Ethically, I remained cautious of seeking discrepancies in power where none may exist or differentiating between rural and urban culture when similarities might be most common and relevant. Remaining honest with the text and seeking the feedback

of the participants helped me to "counter the power orientations within [myself]" (Lincoln & Cannella, 2009, p. 278) and to be conscious of the decisions that I made during interpretation. Additionally, including findings that did not coincide directly with my themes demonstrated that diversity still exists, even where commonalities are discovered.

"Ruralness" in Interpretive Analysis

As noted by Fan and Chen (1998), one of the challenges presented by diverse perspectives in this type of study is that the rural experience needs to be clearly defined based on the existing literature, the participants' lived experiences, and the similarities and differences identified during the data analysis process. Such a process of defining "ruralness" means that one set of definitions was used in the beginning of the study (based on existing definitions) and later adapted based on the specific local experiences of the study participants. For the purposes of identifying a rural school district within an urban county, this study began with the definition of "rural" adopted by DPI, which is the definition and criteria of a rural school district identified by the NCES (R. Muhammad, personal communication, October 25, 2011). However, analysis of the themes identified during the coding process as well as the dissimilar cases provided a more complex definition of "ruralness" that more closely aligns with the social, political, and economic factors that contribute to the overall culture of this particular area.

Trustworthiness in Analysis Process

Yet, it is still possible that my interpretations of the data may fail to acknowledge certain perspectives of the participants and certain aspects of the area's rural culture.

Thus, it was essential that I included member-checks after initial interpretation of the data. By sending drafts of initial analysis to the participants, the trustworthiness of the data coding was improved by ensuring multiple levels of analysis on the collected data.

Additionally, maintaining rigor throughout the study also helped to improve the trustworthiness of the data analysis. This rigor was obtained through attention to construct validity (through the use of multiple sources of data), internal validity (by addressing dissimilar cases or "rival explanations;" Yin, 2003, p. 34), external validity (connecting the case study itself and the interpretations of the data to theory), and reliability (by clearly documenting the data collection and analysis process; Yin, 2003). However, attending to rigor also required reflexivity throughout the data collection and analysis process in order to ensure that I remained honest with myself, the research participants, and the readers (see Bettez, in press) to provide an authentic account of the participants' stories.

This rigor through reflexivity was obtained by being careful to develop interview questions that might allow for the intended type of data (e.g., a response regarding rural culture) while not influencing participants' particular responses to the questions. Such planning and early reflection, then, resulted in the collection of elaborative and insightful data that directly addressed my research questions. Additionally through conscious reflexivity, I was able to remain mindful of my physiological reactions to participants' responses and the potential meanings of these reactions. By recording these reactions during the interviews and journaling about them after the interviews, I was able to recognize the places where my perspectives and feelings on certain issues might

influence the inclusion or exclusion of certain data as well as my interpretations of these data. Likewise, such consciousness of my reactions helped me to remain connected with the responses of the participants and to maintain a strong sense of rapport. This reflexivity also enabled me to code and analyze the data in a more trustworthy manner.

I also used a method of organizing my codes and themes that was meticulous and intensive. As described earlier, I used a process of coding the printed transcripts by hand and then organizing and categorizing via the use of an Excel spreadsheet. Such a process was painstaking but also ensured that I reviewed the data multiple times, with the potential of finding new connections with each review of the data. This part of the process, while laborious, also enabled me to uncover new questions that may serve to add to the complexity of the topic while also making the case for the value of researching such a topic.

Reviews of studies in rural education as well as the findings of Arnold, Gaddy, and Dean (2004) and Kvalsund and Hargreaves (2009), which emphasize the importance of a rigorous research process that is connected to theory and inspired by the unique needs of rural students, schools, and districts, demonstrate the need for a study that recognizes the presence of rural students in urban areas and the valuing of these students' experiences in the school curricula. By incorporating qualitative methods that serve to respect the lived experiences and perspectives of the participants, this study sought to meet Kvalsund and Hargreaves's (2009) criteria for a system- and life-world balance that attends to both national curricula and civic engagement in the local community that can serve as a catalyst for a larger research agenda to inform the co-construction of

transformative curricula that are culturally relevant for rural students in various regions of NC.

CHAPTER VII

ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

From the initial document analysis, it became clear that the Common Core-aligned curricula developed by the school district's educational stakeholders addresses the knowledge and skills of the new national standards but leaves room for the inclusion of local culture in the implementation of curricular units designed to address the standards. The survey results and interview participants' responses indicated that the current curricula and professional development opportunities for area educators neglect place and culture, with the exception of explicit dialogue around the needs of African-American and Latino, or English as a Second Language, students based on general research (not addressing any place-specific needs of these populations). Analyzing the survey results and the interview participants' responses and generational narratives helped to identify some key themes that partly define the rural culture of the area: (1) Ethic of Care, Community, and Closeness; (2) Value of Autonomy and Self-Sufficiency; and (3) Value of Hard Work and Survivor's Grit. However, before using these themes as concepts from which to build culturally relevant curricula for the area's students, gaining an understanding of the rurban complexity of the area, or at least acknowledging its existence, becomes a critical first step in the curriculum (re)development process.

Rurban Complexity

In interviewing all 12 participants, it became apparent from their initial responses to the requests to tell about themselves that defining the culture of the area was going to be as complicated as trying to describe onseself during the course of one or two 60- to 90-minute intereviews. For example, as an African-American from a rural area, James's cultural experience cannot simply be defined as both "rural" and "Black." As James noted, there is overlap between his experiences growing up in a rural area and those of other races from the same rural area, just as there is overlap between his experiences as a Black man and those of a Black man that grew up in an urban area. However, James also contends that a distinction exists between Black rural culture and White rural culture and Black urban culture, which cannot be disaggregated. Just as individuals are shaped by their family histories; their experiences; or their races, genders, sexual-orientations, social classes, etc., the culture of a place is shaped by its history, the intereactions of its people, and the multiple positionalities of the individuals that lived there. Add to these complexities the fact that this particular research site encompasses both rural and urban areas (and every type of locale in between), and the challenges of defining the area's culture become increasingly complicated.

At this point, some might conclude that defining culture is a futile endeavor or that the development of culturally relevant curricula in this area might necessitate an attempt to be inclusive of every possible cultural experience, but that would only serve to perpetuate limitations sometimes noted in attempts to implement culturally relevant curricula: being too broad, thus not truly celebrating nor critiquing any particular cultural

values; or, failing to integrate culture into the curricula, instead treating culture as its own isolted topic of study (e.g., studying African-American history during the month of February; Cannon, 2009; Irvine, 2009). Educators already have the challenge of individualizing instruction for students' learning strengths and weaknesses, so trying to incorporate every possible cultural experience and characteristic of the educators' students becomes an overwhelming endeavor. As Gay (2000) has noted, the goal is not to include every aspect of a group's culture or to direct the inclusion of certain cultural aspects toward a specific group but is, instead, to focus on the cultural elements that might directly affect learning. Knowing that the hidden curriculum already accounts for the dominant culture (to include urban-centrism; Casey, 1998), educators can narrow their focus to those cultural experiences and characteristics that are not already built into the curriculum but that might help to connect students' life experiences to academic content. A study like this one can further highlight some key cultural aspects to be included in the curriculum by attending to the common needs and values identified by the people that live in the area.

As noted in "Chapter III: Rural-Urban Distinction," using a rurban distinction for an area like the research site that might be defined by population density as urban but that includes a significant rural population can help to pinpoint the curricular necessity of attending to rural issues within the urban county while also recognizing the interaction effects caused by the overlap between the urban and rural experiences in this type of area. Completing analysis of local curriculum documents, a survey, semi-structured interviews, and generational narratives provided insight into these interaction effects that create a

rurban culture in this county. However, in trying to describe rurban culture in this area, it cannot be overstated that culture remains complex and that oversimplifcation and generalization can be just as limiting and harmful as failing to recognize this culture altogether. Therefore, I provide this disclaimer around the data analysis to follow: The thematic categories most prevalent in the participants' responses have been featured as concepts around which to integrate cultural relevancy with curricula developed around the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and N.C. Essential Standards; however, these themes are not all-inclusive of either the participants' or the area's students' experiences or backgrounds. Additionally, the analysis of rurban complexity and multiple positionalities that follows highlights the participants' perceptions of the interaction effects between place, race, and socio-economic status in order to provide some insight into the complexity of rurban culture. However, this simplified analysis should not be understood as delineating individuals' experiences of culture into bounded categories.

Figure 3 serves as a graphical representation of the perceived interaction effects of place, race, and socio-economic status identified by the participants. In this figure, urban/suburban Whites are viewed as the "haves," having the most power and wealth (or access to resources) and valuing K-12 education as a means to a college education and post-college professional career. Urban Blacks join most rural Whites, rural Blacks, and rural Latinos in the perceived "have not" category, having less power and wealth and valuing K-12 education as a means for going to work and earning a living following high school graduation. (Rural Latinos are viewed as having the least amount of power and wealth, followed by rural Blacks and, then, rural Whites and urban Blacks.) A small

proportion of the rural Whites have perceived power due to connections within the community and wealth based on sustained land ownership and, thus, align more closely with the urban Whites than the urban Blacks or the rest of the rural community. This perceived spectrum of power and access to resources is encompassed within the identified rurban culture, thus demonstrating its complexity.

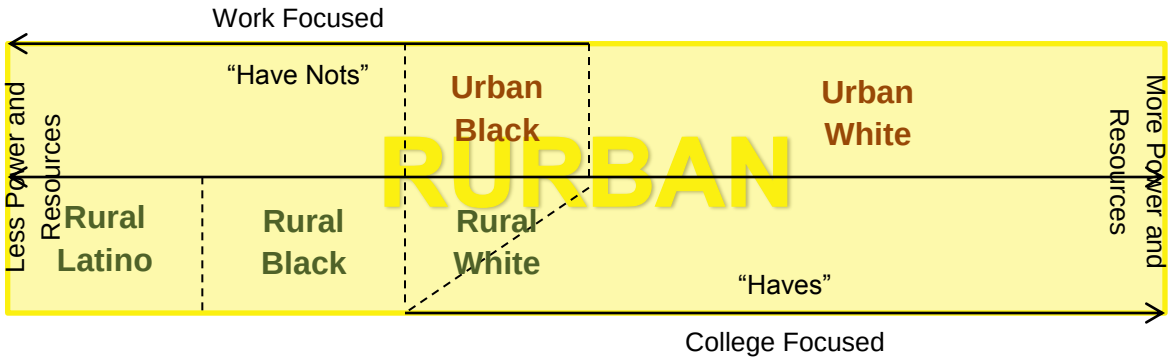

Figure 3. Graphical Representation of the Perceived Interaction Effects of Place, Race, and Socio-Economic Status in the Rurban Research Area. The figure includes dotted lines and arrows to indicate the fluid nature of these descriptions and to serve as a reminder that individual experiences vary from person to person and may vary within one's lifetime.

As this figure illustrates, analysis of the partipants' responses revealed at least four broad complexities associated with rurban culture in this area: (1) Power Differential, (2) Racial Differences, (3) Economic Disparity, and (4) Educational Values. Before examining some of the values that help define rural culture in the area, analysis of the

aforementioned rurban complexities is included in order to provide a context from which to begin curricular discussions around local culture.

Power Differential

A common theme among the study participants was the notion that place matters and that culture is reflected in one's connection to place. In the research area, a power struggle sometimes exists between those who have lived in the area for an extended period of time and those who move to the area from elsewhere. Thus, understanding rurban culture in the research area requires an acknowledgement of the complexity of the perceived power differential between the "insiders" and the "outsiders."

As Betty's Girl's experience as an urban "outsider" indicated, mistrust of "outsiders" by the rural "insiders" can create a divide between people within a community. Even when she was around rural locals that were well-educated like she was, she still felt that she did not belong because she was "not from here." Even her surname indicated outsider status to the locals, since her name seemed foreign to the area. This might be because, according to James, "People…are very leery of people who come in from the outside, and it takes you a long time. You have to almost, you know, raise a family before you get accepted." Betty's Girl shared this perception, saying, "I think it matters…if you're from a rural family that's been in North Carolina for years. I think that was part of the problem for us, was that we had moved in to the area but we had no ties to the area at all." According to Casey (1998), establishing this spatial grounding in the community can require "as much as two to three generations of [a newcomer's] offspring living there before being confirmed as 'one of us'" (p. 19).

Carl articulated that this mistrust and subsequent division between county residents may be the result of a power differential that favors the urban/suburban experience over that of the rural community. In Carl's experience growing up in this community, he always felt more connected with the rural African-American community than the White individuals from the urban/suburban areas. He said:

> I guess in some ways being from a rural area as a White person I feel more connected to the African-Americans here than I do people that look like me that are…from the outside and move into the community…I feel connected with those people in a different kind of way. And, I don't know if that's kind of the humble, rural background or what that is, but I connect easier with African-Americans from the same setting than I do from…White people from kind of an urban setting in some ways…Maybe it's that kind of rural thing of mistrusting outsiders and people that move in to the community from the wealthier urban or suburban areas. Maybe there's an element of mistrust there based off…power dynamics.

For Carl, the people, like his family who have been in the area for generations, are those who developed a connection to the rural community that used to define the county prior to the increased economic and population growth and urban sprawl influenced by the local universities and the local business parks. In Carl's estimation, these locals, who have the most time invested in the community, are not heard as prominently as those who have moved into the more urban areas of the county for the universities or the businesses. Carl and Megan attributed that the education level of those from the university and business communities may provide those from the urban and suburban areas of the county with an advantage. Megan stated:

> For those who are non-minority or primarily Caucasian, I think the power is in the education level and their links to networks in the community...you definitely have

> that contingent of people who are knowledgeable and who are very interested in policy and they know how to use that to make their voice heard. If there is a perceived injustice or if there is something we need to be advocating for in our legislature, they know that.

This difference in empowerment can create a sense of resentment among members of the community, who have invested generations of time and work to the area. As Rye (2011) and Smith and Krannich (2000) have attested, an influx of "outsiders" can reshuffle positions of power within the community as they bring with them different sociocultural identities that can alter the value orientation of the community, thus weakening some of the social capital of the long-time residents. According to Carl:

> I think that [the urban/suburban individuals] are definitely very active in the community, and I think in some ways their voices are heard or, at least, acknowledged more than the poor lower class folks that live in the area, who tend to be people that have lived here a long time. And, you know, I think it's a strange thing for people who have lived here a long time, and then there are people who are moving in and tend to have money to buy houses that have been here for a very long time. When people who have grown up here can't afford 'em, and you have these old historical homes in the area and people that move in have a lot of nicer things and a lot of…more say so in the government here…local government…

Jan shared Carl's view about the urban perspective having more influence in local decision-making and noted the lack of attention to the area's agrarian cultural roots as highlighted by Vernon-Feagans et al. (2010) as significant to individuals from rural areas:

> I always feel like people on the [urban] side didn't treat us like being all that important...that our input really made much of a difference....There's still some people not realizing the needs of the farmers on the northern [rural] end, especially when it comes to voting time. You have people that [are] going to vote on this [southern, urban] end over here...in a different way, and they probably

> have no idea people out [in the northern, rural end] still use farming as an income. The way certain things are voted on could really hurt people in the northern end.

According to Barbara, this influence in decision-making carries over into the schools as well, as parents from the upper-middle to upper class suburban area of the county are able to advocate for the needs of their children. For example, in talking about the principal of the school where Barbara works and, largely, acknowledging the strong leadership of this school administrator, she stated:

> I mean…[the principal's] stable but she's pretty politically motivated. Her decision-making is all tied up in the politics of what goes on, and that shouldn't be. Like…if you're from [a particular expensive suburban neighborhood] and your mom gets mad, your grade gets changed. She seems to be quick to hire more [Academically Gifted] people but not [Exceptional Children], because they're the ones that seem to be the most political; they're the ones that go to church with her.

While these perceived differences in power may result in decision-making that benefits the urban/suburban sector over the rural sector at times, Megan noted that this ability of people in the community to have their voices heard enables this area's schools to thrive when other rural districts may struggle:

> I think one of the differences for [this area versus other rural areas], is, again, that value: that value in the schools, the value about the community. It's not that people in these other places don't have that same value. It's that they don't have the voices or the power to do anything about it the way [this] county does. If you look at the proximity to the universities...I think that makes a difference about the types of people that are attracted to these areas, as a bedroom community for instance, and what they bring as a sense of empowerment and advocacy. I think it's not that the values are different necessarily but the sense of power and advocacy are greater between the two types of rural settings. I definitely think

> there's a huge advantage in location for [this county], with [several universities nearby].

Yet, Megan also noted that power exists within the rural population of the county as well based on social networks that have been established over generations:

> And then you have the folks that just have the natural networks because of their time growing up and staying home in their communities to raise their families. They just have that natural network, and they make their voices known through that network.

Because power in the rural community seems to be established over long periods of time, the process of developing that leadership role among young people can be difficult. With schools located in the urban parts of the county, making the types of connections necessary to feel like an "insider" can be challenging. All of the participants noted the ease of access to social and recreational activities for individuals in the urban areas and the isolation that can occur for individuals in the rural areas despite their strong sense of community.

Sally grew up during a time when the schools were transitioning from small, community schools to consolidated schools. After moving from a community school in her immediate rural area for her elementary years to a consolidated school in the urban part of the county for junior high school, Sally noticed that the distance from school and the lack of transportation prevented her from feeling like a part of the school community:

> The kids from town were involved more socially. They were—it seemed like they were—involved in more activities and more things going on than I was used to. I just had not been exposed… Like cheerleading. I couldn't stay after school for

> cheerleading practice. I really felt like an outsider, because I didn't grow up with those kids and there were so few [kids from the community school]. Even though I...made good grades, but still I felt like an outsider, a loner.

Some strengths of rural schools, like more personal interactions between teachers and students and increased connection between school and community (Brown & Schafft, 2011; Casey, 1998; Collins, 1999; Schramm-Pate, 2002; Vernon-Feagans et al., 2010), thus, were weakened as the area schools were consolidated. For Vernon-Feagans et al. (2010), difficulties with school transitions for rural students may result from further distance from school and less access to public transportation, which was experienced by both Sally and Jan. Like Sally, Jan recognized the challenges of making connections despite having attended consolidated schools in the urban area from the time she entered elementary school. She said:

> It's definitely difficult. Even today, your country is still laid back, but I still believe that the kids, when they get into the schools around kids that may be more from the city, it still probably takes some getting used to. In the country when you get out there, you sort of just stay there; where[as] in the city, you'd get in the car and just go. Easy to meet people and do things. I know with [my family], once we get out there, we're sort of out there. You either connect with people when you're in town coming from work or school—do your little socializing—and I think that's sort of a disadvantage to the kids in the county, especially the way gas prices are now.

While this perceived power differential between those from the urban parts of the county and those from the rural parts of the county highlights a complexity of the larger rurban area, this insider-outsider complexity is further convoluted by a perceived connection between urban values and those of the northern region of the United States.

Southern and rural. In the interviews and narratives of the study participants, discussion of "insiders" and "outsiders" seemed to move indiscriminately from reflection on cultural differences between individuals from rural and urban parts of the county to cultural differences between the U.S. North and South. In many ways, "urban" and "Northern" were place-based descriptors used interchangeably that seemed synonymous with one another. For example, while discussing a pattern of people moving out of the area only to return, Courtney briefly attended to the fact that she moved from comparing rural and urban cultures to comparing cultural differences between the North and the South:

> I mean that's comparing the North to the South but [a friend] says there's that Southern way where everybody is just laid back and they'll help you. Even if you don't know who the person is in the community, they still help you no matter what it is. They'll talk to you. You can be in the grocery store line and learn somebody's whole life story. I was that kid. I just like being in a town where it's familiar to you but it's familiar in a good way. People stay in this town. They do. I can go out and I see people I went to high school with and they went to college and they came back exactly like I did, because we want to be here...It's just a good place to be.

Carl also juxtaposed "rural" and "Southern" when discussing stereotypes of rural individuals in the media. According to Carl:

> You have like Larry, the Cable Guy. I don't feel that it's represented in a way that's flattering by any means. I use Larry, the Cable Guy, as an example because he is a person that's playing a rural kind of character that's not who he is. He plays an idiot, pretty much. I do think there is a perception that people from rural areas are less educated. I do think there is some discrimination. I think it is okay to play into that discrimination, and they kind of get a pass in the media. I, myself, experienced, when I went to college, that, you know, you talk with a thicker accent…I don't think the rural person is someone that is a flattering kind of

> character to be. I think, you're supposed to be nice; you're supposed to be hospitable; you're supposed to be a little bit slower than other people. And, if you believe things or if you are strong and set in your way of thinking, then it's kind of like you're narrow-minded rather than sharp and intellectual.

Schramm-Pate (2002) has found that these negative and romanticized stereotypes of the simple, rural Southerner are prevalent in the media despite examples to the contrary. Consistent with Carl's example of Larry, the Cable Guy, Barron (2006) has noted that rural individuals often are included as comic figures, contributing to the place-based discrimination described by Margolis (1979). Even though Dan Whitney, the comedian that plays Larry, the Cable Guy, grew up in the rural Midwest, his rural character was equipped with a Southern accent that was inspired by his college roommates from Texas and Georgia:

> When we do the "Blue Comedy Tour" together, I'm the only one not born in the South. I'm from the Midwest. I'm the only one who doesn't have the accent, but I'm the only one who grew up living that farm life, that small-town life. (Booth, 2004, p. 3)

Thus, even for a rural Midwesterner, creating a charicature of a rural individual that would resonate with the masses seemed to require a linkage of "rural" and "Southern." This complexity was not lost on several of the participants, who indicated surprise to learn through travel that rural areas existed in states like New York, which typically is represented by its famous urban area, the City of Greater New York. Because of the stereotypes and limited characterizations of rural and urban areas in the media as well as the history of urban areas as sites of modernism and progress, the connection

between the conceptualizations of "outsiders," "urbanites," and "Northerners" by some of the study participants with long-standing ties to the rural research area are understandable. Thus, the perceived power differential between the "insiders" and "outsiders" is further complicated by the participants' equal desire for progress and conservation, which is a challenge identified by Kincheloe, Pinar, and Slattery (1994) as unique to the South.

Progress and conservation. Because progress has been associated with urban culture, thus being perceived as an "outsider" value, the participants seemed to struggle at times with a desire for progress and a desire to conserve the values, buildings, size, etc. of their rural community. However, the participants' desires to incorporate change while holding on to the past further demonstrate a rurban complexity that exists in the area and that lends additional support to Gruenewald's (2003) perspective that attention should be given to what needs to be transformed as well as what can be conserved. Courtney struggled with this dichotomy as she discussed the growth of the area:

> [Downtown's] starting to grow and that makes me a bit nervous. They're building a hospital and they cleared out all this land...and moved all these houses out of it...Now we have doctors...and the hospital and a community college. I think that's what starts to draw more and more people here. Oh, downtown...we have a parking deck. What is that? I wasn't prepared for that. They changed the library, which made me sad, because I really liked the old building the library was in...and the old rec. center and now there's like, this new big, shiny building where the warehouse used to be....I hung out here all the time and now it's not even the Chamber of Commerce. It's some weird building. But it was like this cute, historical house, and I thought that that's what the Chamber of Commerce should be, because that's what represents [the town].
>
> I think they tried to change [Pig Pickin'] Day this year. They tried to bring in barbeque from somewhere that's not even in [the town], which is not good with

> the people of [the town]. They changed up [Pig Pickin'] Day a lot, which is really a tradition you shouldn't mess with. They changed a lot of it. They started charging for every little thing. It used to be like a community thing where we would all hang out but it's not like that any more. That's another thing that bothers me, speaking of the Chamber of Commerce.

Even though Courtney feared the growth of the area and the increased focus on commercialism that appears to accompany the growth, she also seemed excited by some of the improvements made to the old mill section of the town:

> They've even redone the mill area that is in the back of [town]. There is this really cool pet store there now that I took my dog to. There is a dog park now. That's new. There's just all this stuff and I guess...they are focusing on...growing [the town], but I don't want it to grow. They can improve it—there's nothing wrong with fixing those buildings—but don't try to bring more people in.

For James, Max, and Carl, this change within the rural community over the years stemmed from the urban community despite a rural resistance to a change in lifestyle. According to James:

> The more urban people are more progressive than the people I've met in the sticks, but that's everywhere. That's everywhere you look; the people in the country are going to be more conservative than the people in the city. People in the city want business and everything to keep going forward, where the people in the country…it's kind of like the lifestyle that they have and they love their quality of life…They just have a little bit more progressive attitude in the city than they do out in the country.

While a rural resistance to change is still evident in the community, James indicated that the rural community members are becoming more and more open to change, though Carl questions the motivation behind this increasing willingness to accept

change. Carl suggested that perhaps those from the rural community might have learned over time to just accept the change that the outsiders help create. Operating within a framework of social psychoanalysis described by Kincheloe and Pinar (1991), both the distrust of outsiders and the changes experienced by long-time residents may stem from the history of the South as a region of exploitation (Berg & Dassman, 1990; Stewart, 1996). If, as Carl asserted, the perspectives of the long-time locals are not as acknowledged as those who have moved to the area, then the question may be raised: Is this acceptance of change more the result of surrender or interest in change? Carl surmised that the education level of those from the urban/suburban community in this area may provide the following:

> …a means to speak up and be heard. Means to really make things happen when they feel like they want to make things happen, and whereas people who have grown up here and people that are more rural probably accept that it's just the way it is and the way it has to be. So, I guess one key distinction was that by speaking up…this is how I anticipate they may feel…by speaking up, you can make things change and you can make things happen, and probably from a more rural background, you just have to kind of flow with it a little bit; you have to kind of accept things and accept other people and accept them in.

Thus, this willingess to change or this reservation to others' abilities to create change has contributed to a rurban complexity that results in rural individuals' simultaneous participation in change, or progress, and their resistance to it.

Some of this complexity is due to the transitory nature of the area because of the proximity to large universities and business and research parks, while another contributor to this complexity seems to be generational differences. Consistent with sociologist

Beaulieu's (as cited in Alexander, 2010) assumption that a dramatic influx of new people with diverse cultures, languages, and values is a challenge facing rural communities, Carl discussed the changes that he has witnessed in the area since his childhood:

> When I was younger, it was, I think, a lot more community-oriented in a sense in that a lot of people had very similar kind of upbringings. And, I think a lot of people came from very similar kind of humble, lower middle class upbringings. A lot of people kind of worked off those kind of rules and parameters in the same way. That being said, within the last…probably less than 5 to 10 years, there have been a lot of people that have moved into the area from the surrounding universities and that's people that come from different backgrounds and their own kind of upbringings and beliefs on the world, so it changes a lot.

Just as Smith and Krannich (2000) have noted the shifting values that occur as individuals move into rural areas, Barbara "thinks that there are probably a lot of different values that come in to play just because there are a lot of people that move in and out of the community" but that the community members are "real open-minded for new culture and ideas based on where we live in the area." This open-mindedness has evolved for James and Carl as well, who acknowledged their own personal growth due to the changing nature of the area and their experiences outside of their rural hometowns. According to Megan, the "pride in the agricultural community that's been established for years of being raised by the farmer" cannot be carried on to its full extent by the younger generation due to shifts in the farming industry; yet, both James and Carl recognized that the self-proclaimed conservative values of hard work, religion, and family of their rural upbringings still hold true for them even though they have become more progressive around social issues.

Racial Differences

Among these social issues present within the research area are inequities around race both within the rural community and between the urban and rural communities. Within the research area, the participants noted that much of the focus on culture has revolved around race, with a particular focus on the education of African-American children and English Language Learners and the relationship between Blacks and Whites. According to Stanley, when the districts' educators worked on the development of curricula around the CCSS, conversations of culture came up around the achievement gap between the White students and the Black and Latino students. He stated:

> [These conversations] definitely happened within the past school year, because—I think one that's new for [this] county—it used to be mainly a district of Black and White students and that's really changing with Hispanic and Latino students moving into the district in quite large numbers. When we say "cultural," I think a lot of people go straight to that because this new subgroup of students is not something they've planned for in the past. That's not all cultures, but that's definitely something we look at as we've developed curriculum.

While James acknowledged that these conversations are occurring, he remains skeptical that much progress will be made:

> I'll be frank with you. I think we talk a lot about the achievement gap, but we don't do much…The only thing that's going to help it is to increase resources, and we're not going to do that. The money's not there; the resources are not there. The only time that that gap has gone away was when they poured resources into the poor families back in the 80s, and we're not going back to that. So, we can talk about it all we want but until we get the resources out to the families and out to the kids and to the school, it ain't going away. It's not. We can try to put a window dressing on it, but it's not. It's not going away.

Megan also noted a discrepancy in the amount of resources and level of advocacy directed toward Latino families in the community. Her experience within the district has led her to believe that there is ground to be made up when comparing the level of advocacy for Latino students and Black students in the area. Megan shared the following example:

> For instance, you have a huge advocacy group among the Northern [County] Education Task Force and it primarily looks at issues in education and overall well-being for African-American children. I don't know that that voice has necessarily coalesced for Latino families in [this] county. [This] county has a growing population of Latino families. I don't know if there has been a concerted foundation of support for issues that are very unique to the immigrant families.

Perhaps the explanation provided by Foster (2007) and Leonardo and Hunter (2007) that deficit-based perceptions can lead to decreased spending on urban education can provide an explanation for the lack of resources devoted to lessening the achievement gap in the research area as well. Without a concerted effort to increase resources, Megan suggested that Latino families may look outside of the school system for support, continuing to trust one particular bi-lingual resident, who helps immigrant families navigate the education system and the local social support system. The lack of attention to the needs of Latino families provided by the local school district led Megan to posit, "So who helps this particular segment of that population navigate? What happens if something pops up and they don't understand how to navigate the system? Who do they go to?"

As a growing population, the needs of Latino students and their families add to the complexity of the area as educational stakeholders consider whether or not they are

attending to the needs of all of the county's residents with the shifting demographics of the county. For the participants, students need to be able to see themselves reflected in the curriculum by including Native American, Latino, Black, and rural cultures and by introducing students to people and events of significance to the area. As James stated:

> We're really focused on testing, and we've done very well with that but…there's a culture gap between Blacks and Whites and Hispanics and Whites… But, to bring in more diversity inside of our curriculum, to bring in more historical things inside of our curriculum, I think, would help. Because these kids don't know that there are people who were actually mathematicians who were Black or Hispanic, doctors that were Black and Hispanic, and historians that were Black…right down the street…These are people who were huge figures in the history of not just North Carolina but the country.

While curricular discussions within the district may have revolved around the growing Latino population, these discussions have not addressed the changes in the relationships between Blacks and Whites in the area since the time of segregation. During Maureen's time working in the county's mill (beginning in the 1930s), she did not acknowledge racial tension between Blacks and Whites, because Black and White mill workers were segregated into two different mills and, thus, did not live in the same mill housing. For James, who grew up during integration, he noticed that "there was a lot less enforced integration in the country." He continued:

> We were separated by space, not just by demographics and by school districts. There [were] two schools. There was a Black school and a White school, and the differences between those sometimes dictated whether it was a Black school or a White school. I mean, culturally, the culture was different.

This separation between Blacks and Whites also extended into the church community, which further delineated Black rural versus White rural culture according to James:

> To me, there was a lot more tolerance and a lot more interaction between Black and White [in urban areas] than it was, say for instance, in our [rural] area. We were predominantly, mainly Baptist and there was a strict separation of color based on religion and denomination, and I could see that's a huge difference. There wasn't much interaction. If you lived in the city or you lived in close, close proximity or if you live in an area where there is interaction from the church level, then I think there is more interaction between Blacks and Whites.

While integration within the schools eventually took root (though racial separation within the churches still exists within some denominations), Jan indicated that elective separation between Whites and Blacks occurred in the schools even though there was no obvious conflict between the two racial groups. She stated:

> I don't remember seeing any kind of Mexicans. You got your Whites and your Blacks. Your groups were more separated then than they are now, today. It wasn't any kind of conflicts but your groups just sort of stayed separated. The two groups just sort of kept interacting with their groups…sort of stayed in their little spaces. Again, there was no issues...Everybody sort of knew everybody out in the country, but, still, the two races were just separated, but you still didn't have conflicts or issues of fighting or anything like that.

By the time Carl entered school in the area in the 1980s, another shift occurred, resulting in increased conflict between White and Black students that continued until a few years ago. Part of this conflict may have been attributed to the lack of attention to multiculturalism and the failure to recognize White diversity (or acknowledgement of marginalized ethnic Whites) within the schools, thus resulting in the rejection of

solidarity with other marginalized groups by some students of different races/ethnicities (Heilman, 2004). According to Barbara:

> [Up until several years ago], there seemed to be more of a division between Black and White and between country and not country. Over the last few years, it's sort of changed. I don't know if it is because the minority population has gone down so much. There are no Black kids here anymore. It's like the weirdest thing. I'm like, "Where are the Black children?" because we used to have at least eight or nine kids that were Black in our class and now we have one or two. It's weird. I don't know if more kids have moved out of the area because the taxes and rental prices here are more expensive than in [surrounding areas]. I don't know.

Barbara also mused that a redistricting of the schools that resulted from the opening of a new middle school in the county approximately seven years ago may have led to this shift in demographics. This explanation seems more consistent with Courtney's experience at a high school in the area that pulls from two of the district's middle schools. Courtney highlighted the racial and economic diversity of the school where she has started her first year teaching and has noticed that the students from diverse backgrounds seem to get along well with one another. Courtney recounts her experience attending high school in the district approximately five years ago:

> There was diversity at [the high school] and there were so many groups coming together, but we were all still friends anyways…I don't know if that happens in other places. The schools that I worked in, in [another urban county], it didn't happen that way.

Though positive relationships between peoples of diverse backgrounds seem to permeate the experiences of the participants currently involved in the schools, attention to the evolving nature of these relationships should continue to be cultivated within discussions

of race in this community. As a rurban area, the perceived differences between races and the perceived differences between the same races within the rural versus the urban communities also require deliberation when acknowledging the complexity of the area's rurban culture.

With the melding of rural and urban values and experiences in this area, attending to cultural differences between different racial/ethnic groups is inadequate. This is due to the fact that, while the cultural experience of a Black individual from a rural area may differ from the cultural experience of a White individual from the same rural area, the Black rural experience may also differ from the Black urban experience. Thus, in a rurban community that brings together individuals from rural and urban areas, cultural differences cannot simply be recognized along racial/ethnic lines.

James noticed this difference when he left the rural community in which he was raised to attend college, where he interacted with Black people from a variety of communities. In James's experience:

> When you have somebody that lives next to you, I guess the way you treat them is going to be different than if you have somebody that lives a few acres away from you or a couple miles away from you. By that I mean, I think, we were more isolated and because of that I noticed a difference when I got to college. Because in college…there were different people from different aspects and different Black people from different communities and from the city—and then it wasn't such a big deal about suburban—but there were city kids, we called them, and there were country kids. I was one of them. Then yet, there were some attributes that were strikingly different. Seems to me we weren't as fast. I don't know if I'm describing it right but the pace of our life was a lot slower. One of the things that was instilled to me very early on was patience, taking your time. Growing up in the country and around tobacco and cotton farms, our grandparents and parents, too, had to deal with patience, because there was a lot of racial strife and there was a lot of conflict and sometimes patience was the only thing to get you through

> it. I always said the difference between us and them was that country kids had a lot more patience.
>
> It could be equated to tolerance, too. If you look back through history, most of your revolutionaries came from the cities; they didn't come from the country. The difference was kind of extended to each individual personality, too. There was patience and probably a little more adherence to more conservative views and, especially with the religious and social views, it was probably more pronounced in my culture than a Black child coming up in the city.

Despite these noted differences, James also contended that a connection between the Black rural community and the Black urban community exists due to Black flight from the rural areas to the urban areas that occurred with his grandparents' and parents' generations. In the few cases where Black farmers owned their own land, these families tended to remain in the rural community for generations. For those, like James's family, who were Black sharecroppers, the economic instability of only getting a small share of the crops harvested resulted in a "great migration" to urban areas, which, in James's estimation, has contributed to the economic inequities that one might see in the Black community. According to James:

> In America, a lot of those inequities in net worth and income today are totally based on whether or not your family had property. Again, if you had a huge farm, stemming back even 50 years ago, if you had a huge plot of land, you were going to do all right and you knew you were going to do all right. A lot of the poverty we see were those families that experienced…they left and went to the cities and eventually they formed the ghettos, so a lot of those can say the progeny of non-owners are the ones that are suffering the most right now. Those are the ones that have no net worth at all. They have lower education, I would guess. I don't know for certain or know the statistics on that, but I would guess that would be the case.
>
> There is still a huge Black underclass, and I think the rift between the "have" and "have nots," just like in general society, is getting wider and a lot of that is stemming from the rural. Most big farms now are more cooperatives. Nobody

> farms for sustenance anymore. Nobody farms just for them. If you're doing all right as a co-op or you're doing all right as a larger farm today, you're probably doing all right but as far as the Black sustenance farmers that canned and had chickens and pigs and that, no, that's gone. That era for black people is gone. For me I loved it. I didn't know there was anything different. I thought that's the way all people lived. You made your own food. You pretty much lived your own life, but I can see now the progeny of those, of the Black flight, the migration. The great migration has contributed to not only a difference in equity but a breakdown in family…I think a lot of it had to do with why there is such a weakness in the Black family tradition now, currently. There is. We have a lot of issues we need to get through and a lot of it stems from that, I think.

The complexity of the cultural differences within the rural community and between the rural and urban communities and the economic disparity that exists within and between these communities is only further complicated within the rurban community. Just as the "great migration" influenced the make-up of the Black urban community, the presence of the rural and urban communities within the research area influences the culture of the area in complex ways. Rurban complexity involves understanding rural and urban cultures as somewhat distinct while also understanding that the overlap between them creates an entirely separate (rurban) culture. Just as the complexity of race impacts the culture of the rurban area so, too, does the presence of economic disparity that exists beyond racial categories.

Economic Disparity

Part of this complexity stems from the fact that one cannot attend to race as an aspect of rurban culture without addressing the relationship between race and economics. According to James, economic struggles cut across racial lines but also can increase segregation if race is not addressed in relation to economic disparity. James said, "Within

the ‘have nots,’ you have poor people who are White and poor people who are Black, who are even more segregated now because of that lack of discussion, and we don’t need that. So, we need to be all talking ‘cause we’ve got a lot of work to do.” This work also needs to involve the Latino community, who might remain segregated from the larger community as well due to the absence of advocacy identified by Megan previously. James’s and Megan’s concerns are consistent with the findings cited earlier that 78.4% of rural minority students are living in poverty (Johnson & Strange, 2009). Attending to the economic disparity that exists within the county requires attention to issues of access to resources, which, if not addressed, perpetuates structural, physical, and pedagogical divisions between what James calls the “haves” and “have nots.”

All of the participants noted economic disparity within the area and the clear divide between the affluent and those who are struggling financially. According to James, “Increasingly, there’s an economic divide and…that’s one of the things that disturbs me. I think that there is a strong division between the ‘haves’ and ‘have nots’ in [the county], and I think some of that stems from [the southern part of the county, which is more urbanized and in close proximity to the university].” Max and Betty’s Girl highlighted the sense of competition that exists due to this economic disparity, which sometimes results in physical or verbal altercations. Betty’s Girl even noted these feelings among friends as one economically disadvantaged student commented about his friend, “You know, he never wears the same pair of shoes twice. He’s got a different pair of shoes for every day.” In talking about the economic struggles of the farming community in the area, Max stated:

> Farming is tough right now. And, they're struggling; the parents are struggling; the kids are struggling. But yet, the kids still want…there is a sense of competition that they feel that in order to belong to a group and in order to be a part of everything, they have to compete, and their form of competition is the brand name clothes and shoes, and they don't have it, and when they're wearing hand-me-down or second-hand clothes from the Salvation Army or Good Will, they just hope that nobody realizes, 'cause God forbid someone walks in and says, "I used to have a shirt just like that." It's hard. These kids coming from the rural area, they're struggling.

While the culture of the area includes a strong value of community and closeness that brings people together despite their economic situations (discussed later in this chapter), the economic disparity of the area impacts the area's culture as the great need of some of the community's citizens is juxtaposed against the great wealth of some of the other residents. Courtney described these extremes:

> I worked with a church [in an area that is supported by the school where I work where] there is a homeless community. Some of my students live in that area and I know the things that they need. Good news is the school provides a lot of that. Churches around the community will give us different…We have a student who actually has to take a shower when he gets here in the morning and churches around here donate all the things we need for that. They donate…we have a washer and dryer here, so we can do that as well. When I was in high school, we would hand out bag dinners…just so they would have the food.
>
> When you go down [another road a short distance from the homeless community], there are some big houses. There is a house there that is ridiculous, probably the size of the school. I don't know. It's got so many windows you don't even know what to do with them. So, it's all the way around in this place.

Even for those families in the area who are more financially stable, differences in infrastructure throughout the county create disparity between the rural and urban areas.

In addition to the financial disparity that divides the community, the participants in this study also noted the lack of access to technology and technological infrastructure for individuals in the rural areas of the county, which have been identified by Alexander (2010) as challenges for rural communities. With the recent implementation of a one-to-one laptop initiative in the school district, the educators discussed the promise of this initiative to provide access to technology for the economically disadvantaged students. However, a common concern was that the rural areas of the county lack the access to Internet necessary for the full benefit of the technology. This is due to the fact that Internet service is either not available in the rural community or the service that is available is unreliable or slower in connection speed. Jan also contended that, while anticipating that the infrastructure will become available to the rural community eventually, the rural areas simply are not a priority:

> It might be available on this road over here, but then at this intersection, it might not be available on this road over here. So it's sort of in spells. I know it's eventually coming but definitely you have an advantage being in the city for having better phone service, better cell service, faster Internet. We have Internet now but it's not that fast but it's the fastest you can have at this moment and that can be frustrating with today, if you're needing to do some work at home or a project or something and your Internet's not quite as efficient. You know now you don't want to go too much to the library anymore, you just look online and try to get your information. I also say, remember we have storms and stuff, as a kid out in the country if your power was out, you could just forget it. You were going to be one of the last people to get your power back on. The city folks would be first. I can remember one time we went almost eight days without power because you're just not priority. You almost felt like you were slighted being out there.

Such realities create challenges for both families and teachers as the district increases the integration of technology with their curriculum. For example, Max indicated that families

and teachers have to work together to create solutions for rural families without the necessary access to Internet technology:

> The kids that have access to Internet at home will still be able to do their research, will still be able to do their Moodle assignments online, and the kids who are living out in the rural areas and the families still struggling are still going to have to come to school early in the morning and stay after school to get their same work done. So, I don't see it being balanced.

Barbara concurred that these challenges necessitate that rural students spend more time at school in order to have access to the technology required to complete their academic work: "Yeah, there are kids that don't have free Internet access, and most of the time we encourage [families] to put them in the free afterschool program so they are able to do their homework before they go home." While the district's schools provide the tools, time, and supervision to address these discrepancies in access to technology, an additional burden of finding transportation for students who stay in the afterschool program is put on rural families who live farther away from the schools.

Additionally, James and Betty's Girl asserted that due to access, individuals from the urban areas are much more open to and skilled with technology, which also provides an advantage to the students from the urban areas of the county. With access to technology limited to the time spent in school, rural students have less practice with technology, which may extend to their parents as well. While limited exposure to technology is better for rural students' academic and career preparation than no exposure, disparity continues to exist between rural and urban communities due to differences in the technological infrastructure within these various parts of the county. Yet, the district's

constituents, regardless of place of residence, unilaterally supported the one-to-one laptop initiative, demonstrating the value that the county's citizens places on its schools and education in general, even when such decisions present additional challenges for some families.

Educational Values

The study participants noted the financial support that the district's residents provide for the schools even during difficult economic times. Megan and Courtney believed that this strong support for the schools stems from the fact that the district is small in number of schools and students, with many of the schools having long-established histories in the area. According to Megan:

> That community supports its schools. When something goes down that's not as politically nice, look at what happens at a board meeting. That place is packed. People are spilling out of the building to support whatever. If they perceive a fight for a teacher or administrator that they think is unfair, people will show up. It's just amazing to me and I don't know; it would be an interesting question: Is it the size of the district that kind of promotes that? You don't get lost.

Courtney recognized this strong support that the community has for its schools as well and attributed this support to a strong sense of connection to the schools' history in the area:

> The kids here really love this school, and, I think, the people in general really love this school. If you go out into the community and you talk about [the county], people know [of the oldest high school in the district]. Again, I think this comes, too, because this school has been here for so long.

Despite the changes to the area, the schools provide a connection to the past that brings together generations of residents. Courtney noted this connection to the schools when the oldest high school in the district received some structural updates:

> They redid the front of the school...[The high school principal] has been working hard because people really do care a lot about this school. They redid the whole front, and we just had a ribbon-cutting ceremony for it. The superintendent was also here. We did that for homecoming, so people in the community all came back for it. People were like genuinely excited about it...But it looks really pretty now, and people are so excited about it. I've never seen people get so excited about the front of a school building. I think that showed me also how excited people are about this school.

Due to the small size of the school district and the residents' personal histories with the schools, the district's constituents support the schools financially and advocate for the needs of the school system and its employees. Megan described this difference that she has seen in this district compared to other districts with significant rural populations:

> Oh my gosh, that community supports its schools... Every year during the budget writing time, we always get this email, "Go out to the county commissioner's meeting. They're meeting at the courthouse. We need your voices there." That place is packed when that happens. People who are there are some staff members and teachers, but it is typically packed of people who speak on behalf of the school system who don't even have kids or grandkids in the school, but they stand up for the needs of the school system. It is absolutely amazing to me even in the most difficult financial times, which we've experienced recently. That community comes out for its school system. Then if you look at the most recent one to one laptop initiative there was some type of sales tax or something that happened to try to support that. There was some increase in a tax. It was a fraction of whatever but still in this recession for a community to say yes on a tax? They did it and that was how they were able to get the laptops...That's a huge investment in technology, so to speak, but you would think in a recession people would want to tighten up on everything.

Megan also noted that this support for the schools happened at the classroom level as well, as parents in the community offered support to the teachers regardless of their backgrounds:

> I remember as a teacher in [the county] attending the open house night with my mentor teacher's class. You had farmers with overalls on and your professionals, and every single one of them would say, "You just let me know if you need anything; we're here for you."

While placing high value on education seems to be a priority for all of the county's residents, differences in how education is valued exists in this county.

The differing perspectives on the purpose of education within the community add to the rurban complexity of the area regardless of whether or not educational decisions are supported throughout the rural and urban parts of the county. Despite false stereotypes that individuals from rural areas place less value on education (Schramm-Pate, 2002) and according to the participants' experiences, education is a priority for all of the district's constituents. However, education tends to be valued by the rural community as preparation for the work force and valued by the urban community as preparation for college. Courtney has seen this with the parents of her students, who "really are busy because they're working so many jobs in order to support their family and the kids' education… It's more of where are you going to work versus where are you going to go to school." Barbara shared the same perspective:

> I guess a lot of people that move into the area really value education. Their parents work in [a nearby corporate and research park], so they really value education. So, they come in and they expect their kids to be exposed to all

> different kind of things. I think there is a value of education. In the rural community, there is also a value of education. They feel like their kids should be educated well but not necessarily the push to go on to college.

This was Carl's perspective of growing up in the area as well. In Carl's experience, hard work involved graduating from high school, though the expectations for higher education were not articulated by his family or members of his community due to the emphasis placed on work and family:

> Just kind of speaking from my experience, where I've come from, [attending college and taking advanced classes] wasn't necessarily the expectation. The expectation was you graduated from high school and you go to work and start a family, that kind of thing. I don't want to speak for everybody that had a similar situation like me, but I think that was the case for a lot of people with similar background.

According to Schramm-Pate (2002), this hold-over view of education from the Reconstruction period may influence this perspective in the modern rural community, even if the residents are not aware of its historical origins. Even in circumstances where education is viewed by rural parents as providing opportunity for higher education, the participants discussed how parents might be less familiar with the requirements of school, especially given, as James articulated, that schools have changed greatly from the time many of these parents were in school.

On the other hand, the participants suggested that the families from the urban/suburban community tend to value grades and push their children to be involved in more challenging classes, like the Academically Gifted Program. Betty's Girl also indicated that the more affluent families from the urban/suburban community tend to

desire multiple chances for their children to "get it right." For Carl, these different expectations influenced the types of classes that students took:

> It seems that…and this is just from kind of growing up here…even back in those days, there were kids that seemed like they had educated parents…parents that went to college and were more intellectualized, and those kids were in the Academically Gifted classes and, you know, it always seemed like those folks had a priority on education, and it didn't start with those kids being smart; it started with a kind of an expectation was there.

With these differences in perspective on the value of education, the challenge for the area's schools is finding a balance between career and college readiness that does not limit students' opportunities to one track over another. While the CCSS, with its balanced focus on "college and career readiness," provide goals for curriculum development that address both types of knowledge and skills, the participants noted that, currently, the purposeful inclusion of activities and concepts that might be valued by the rural community as relevant to their experiences and future plans are limited to classes, like agriculture, welding, and auto mechanics, that are a part of Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs.

Rural Values

One way to extend this cultural relevancy for rural students to the core curriculum of English/Language Arts, Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies, taken by all students is to teach the knowledge and skills identified in the CCSS through concepts based on the values of the local rural community. Based on the survey results and the responses of the interview and narrative participants, some values common within the

rural community emerged. While the values of integrity (rural), modesty (rural), respect (rural), self-care (urban), and consumerism (urban) were mentioned by isolated participants as values of the local community, the following values were common to all participants' responses: Ethic of Care, Community, and Closeness; Value of Autonomy and Self-Suffiency; and Value of Hard Work and Survivor's Grit.

In exploring these values from which to construct curricular concepts for academic unit development, it is important to keep in mind that each value and the rurban complexity discussed previously influence and are influenced by each of these values, with some intersection between them. *Figure 4* demonstrates how the key rural values highlighted by all study participants overlap with one another and influence and are influenced by the aspects of rurban complexity discussed previously.

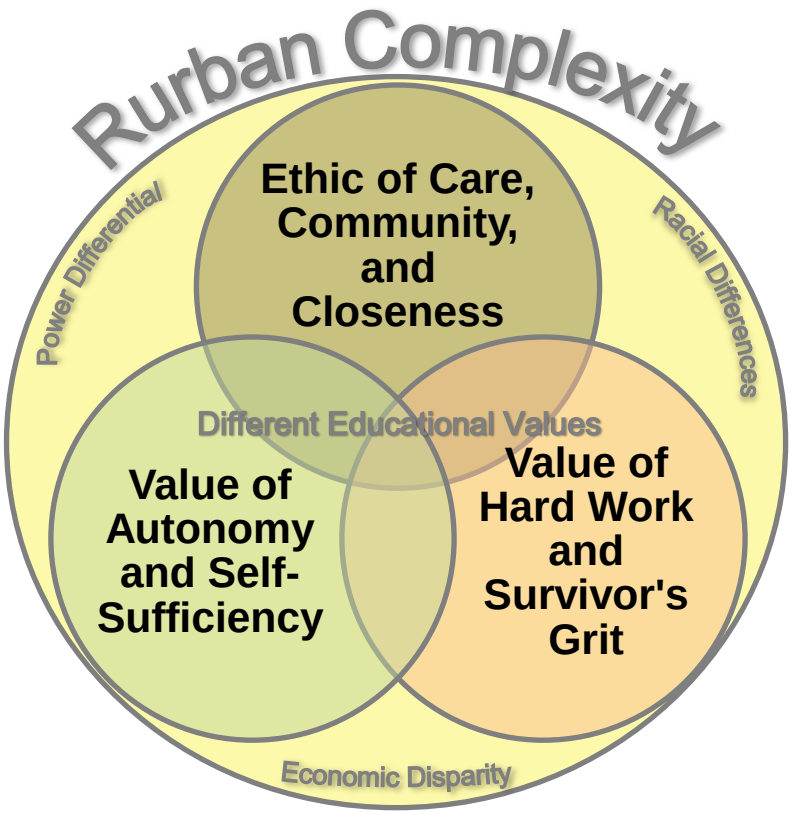

Figure 4. Key Rural Values from Which to Construct Curricular Concepts. The figure includes rural values highlighted by all study participants and represents the overlap between values and the interaction with various aspects of rurban complexity.

Ethic of Care, Community, and Closeness

According to the participants, a key value of the rural community in the area is care over competition, which is counter to the value of competition identified as important to the urban community and key to the development of the CCSS, which highlights global competitiveness in its mission (CCSSI, 2012a). Within the rurban context of the research area, the rural values of care, community, and closeness can be

incorporated into the curriculum, which already includes the urban value of competition intrinsic in its development around the CCSS.

These values of care, community, and closeness were, at one time, built into the structure of the educational system in the area before the rural community schools were consolidated into the urban areas of the county. In the rural community schools, the students and educators knew each other and, according to what Jan has heard from her father, "Everybody was just family. There was not a person that you did not know out there. Not a teacher or anything." While Sally saw the necessity of school consolidation to address some of the challenges for rural schools, including the need for increased access to resources, certified teachers, and occupational opportunities (Alexander, 2010; Saha, 1997; Smith, 1999; Vernon-Feagans et al., 2010), she found the transition from the rural community schools to the consolidated schools in the urban area as stressful:

> At that time, they started consolidating the community and the rural schools into the urban area. I suppose it was getting qualified teachers or just not having the necessary resources in the remote rural areas that, educationally, needed to be provided... There was not two grades to a room and even with two grades to a classroom at [the rural community school], there was probably not 30 children in a classroom. Much larger school and many more students when I went to the junior high. It was kind of overwhelming.

Despite being a difficult transition, as Vernon-Feagans et al. (2010) have found in their study of the school consolidation process, the consolidated schools opened students' eyes to career possibilities that existed beyond the agricultural community. According to Sally:

> When I was growing up, in the years that I grew up, [people from the rural area] had an option more than the generation before me just because the smaller schools

> were being consolidated into the urban area and a larger school. So, they weren't restricted in the environment to just local and farming. I think there was a transition with my generation to the previous generation, where in my generation the schools were consolidated after the sixth grade so going into the urban community, they saw options other than just farming or staying with whatever the family was doing, which was mostly farming.

While this increased awareness of career possibilities seemed to benefit people from the rural areas, it also meant that rural students entered an educational context built around competition (Hobbs, 1979), as Sally saw when she entered the urban school where students were grouped into classes based on academic ability. For Jan, this competitive context presents some social challenges in the interactions between rural and urban students as she suggested that "kids from the country would be easier to interact with than kids from the city," since "kids from the city would be like more competing with one another and maybe from the country there's not really any of that."

According to Megan, the sense of community and ethic of care that Alexander (2010) and Sim (1988) have found present in many rural areas and that exists in the rural area of the research site developed out of necessity because of the issues of access discussed previously. She stated:

> Of course it takes a bit longer and you have to go further to get to the institutional resources and the government resources so what are you going to do in the mean time? You take care of each other. Just that sense of sharing. For instance, I always think about growing up, my grandparents would usually go in with another family, usually relatives, to raise hogs. They would have slaughter day...When they would slaughter hogs, they shared. [When I was teaching in the district], I didn't know anybody in my class that had hogs, but at certain times of the year, especially because I was in a year-round school with the gardens, I would have kids bringing me baskets of tomatoes. When they found out what I liked, I would get these bushels of tomatoes, corn, strawberries...Even if it was

> something I didn't know how to prepare being 22 or 23 years old...I'd call my mom and say, "Hey, can you tell me how to can or prepare this stuff, so it doesn't go to waste or we can share it." And it was a lot of work and even if you didn't put into it, people were still willing to share with you...I was always...well taken care of by the moms and dads. Even the dads would be like, "Is there anything you need today?" They would come by whenever, and if I had a flat tire, they would change my tire. It was just the coolest ethic of care. That's what it is: an ethic of care about each other. Even if we had political differences, we'll talk about it then move on. It's not going to stop me from helping someone as their child's teacher. I like to think it's because of our connection through their child. I really think that had a lot to do with it, and I don't know that that changes from urban to rural. I don't know, but it was strong. I think because of the care I put into their child it was appreciated. It was the coolest thing to get these baskets of tomatoes and ears of corn and okra...That sharing of the bounty because we'd been blessed with it. It is not up to us to hoard it or keep it, especially if someone is hard on their luck. You really reach out.

Jan concurred that the nature of the rural community in the area is to help those in need regardless of your connection to them. She shared that people in the rural community helped one another with farming, sharing resources and providing labor, but that this care for one another extended beyond farming:

> Not just with farming but out there in that small community area, even on both sides of the county, when there's storms that come through and damage is done, people jump to go help others. It's just sort of like the routine; that's what you do. People look after other people. When it snows, everybody's first priority is the elderly out there or the older folks that can't get out and scrape their drive. They go over and that's taken care of for them. We do community fundraisers for maybe the fire department or someone that maybe is having medical issues to help with medical bills. People make sure that food is taken to those folks that typically can't get out and get a plate. There's a lot of just nurturing after other people that maybe just can't get out and do their regular things. Again, when there's storms and when there's damage, there's people there for clean up and to put things back like it was. And that continues today; that's just always been something that they're known to do out there. Even if you really didn't know the person but you knew of their age and where they lived, you went in there and jumped in and did something or you went by to visit and asked them did they need anything.

Jan and Megan each described how this ethic of care has been ingrained in the culture of the area over generations as this value is instilled in the younger generations by the older residents. Megan said:

> Then, this idea of the multigenerational raising of kids, the taking care of community kids, it takes me back to my grandma...I saw that again in [this county]. If there was something happening, it was everybody's child. Everybody had a responsibility to help take care of it. I don't know if you'd get that in a bigger urban setting. You still have multigenerational parents and grandparents sure, but this was more than just that grandparent's responsibility. Everybody took hold of that kid. We knew in the school what was happening. If one person or grandma can't provide something, we had the churches...If somebody has just hit a brick wall, the community just rallies around that person and they don't even need to know who. You just know somebody needs you. If I have it, I'm expected to share it with my neighbor...Just that ethic of care for your neighbor, a sense of community.

Even though people in the rural areas are not as close in proximity to one another as those in the urban areas of the county, the perception is that the rural people are more connected with one another. When Jan lived within the city limits, she did not witness this same ethic of care, saying, "In [the town], it was pretty much convenient and close to everything, but I don't feel like people are as close because it's much larger...and life is a little bit more stressful." Courtney also noticed this ethic of care where it did not exist in urban schools where she had previous experience:

> If you need something, people will get it no matter what it is. Even if you don't need it; you just kind of want it; someone will get it for you. That's just the way it is. Everybody has connections, which I think is crazy. We'll start talking about somebody and others will be like, "You're talking about this person?" And we'll be like, "Yeah, we're talking about him," and they'll be like, "Oh yeah, we'll get him to do this," and everything gets done. I want an outdoor classroom for my kids and everyone knows somebody. The guy in construction is getting the wood

> and he's building me tables, and somebody knows somebody else over at Home Depot and they're giving me this. It's just crazy. I don't really need it, but I think that I do so… people will help you. I honestly didn't get that at some of the schools in [Grassboro]. Now some of them I did. I think my favorite would have been [Clayton Elementary] but evern that was still what I would call a neighborhood type area. Here it doesn't matter what they teach, or if they don't even know you; actually, we all kind of know each other. They all help each other. I didn't get that at some of the other schools.

Even though Carl noted that both rural and urban individuals might get together around similar interests or economic statuses, all of the participants suggested that people in the rural community typically stick together. James stated:

> You know, they're not really a xenophobic county, but I think they do kind of band together when things get hard, and I notice that whenever outsiders come in, they kind of band together. And, on that, it's kind of borderline nepotism because, I think, they do take care of their own around here.

While issues of access to resources may contribute to the ethic of care in the rural community, the connection to family that extends generations within the same area by many of the area's residents also can play a part in the desire to look out for one another. Megan noted:

> There's a value about community itself and you can see that when the community rallies around different things that may not necessarily be school linked or school-based. But when something happens in the community, they pull together. So valuing the community and valuing and taking care of one's neighbors, it's a huge thing out there and a lot of people know each other and might be related or married or whatever, but I see that a lot. They really just…across congregations or whatever, believe there's just a pulling together and the value of community. When something happens in the community, we take care of the community, too.

For all of the participants, the community closeness that extends from close family connections and their networks built over generations differs from any value of family that may exist in the urban community. Carl noted that even when urban/suburban families are close with one another, the characteristics of family connection typically are different from the rural experience of family:

> I think sense of family is a lot different from people that are from suburban kind of settings versus people that are kind of in rural settings, because people in rural settings, their family tends to be far and out-reaching and includes a lot of people in the community; whereas, people who have moved into a more urban, or…people who are more transient, their family relationships are probably a lot different…It's probably farther extending geographically but less…enmeshed sounds like a…I don't know how to describe it…but less involved. That's one of the things, growing up in the rural community, most people knew each other.

Courtney noticed this difference as well, as she learned of the family relationships of some of her peers:

> Oh, [my whole family's] here...My friend who's from Pittsburg, she's like, "My brother is in LA, and my parents are here and some here and over here." I'm like, "No! My mom is across the street; my grandma is right down the road; my aunt is right over there." I'm like, "No, how do you do that?" and my mom is sitting there saying, "That's not how family works." I told her, "Well, Mom, people do that. They live states away from each other." Not here though. I see my grandmother multiple times...a week. I see my aunt multiple times a week. Even further extended family or people that aren't family or basically were family, I still see them all the time. We're always together. I don't know if that's a rural thing...It might be actually because you don't move away. You stay here and you all want to be close to each other. My husband's family, they all live on the same plot of land they've had all their lives. They all just built houses on the land and they walk through the cornfields to get to each other's houses. Now that's really taking it rural.

As Courtney mentioned, that connection to "family" extends beyond biology to friends with strong ties to the biological family. For many in the rural community, the church becomes an extension of the family as churches often serve as local, more accessible sites for socialization. James and Sally noted that participating in social activities and recreation often involved travel to the urban areas but that church was a local activity that was a regular part of families' weekly activities. According to Casey (1998), family and church (along with school) serve as central entities that support rural identity and connection. James described his experience:

> We didn't have clubs for the most part and all that, so, in order to get some social activity, you had to go to the cities...anything other than sitting home reading. That's what you had to do. I think we were more, and that's just from my aspect, I'm sure anybody from the city would totally disagree with me, but I think we were more in touch with our elders and with church. A lot of our social activities came through church…I just remarked to someone the other day, when I came up, we didn't have boy scouts; we didn't have socials. We didn't have that kind of stuff, so how else were we gonna meet people in our circles except for church?

Despite being a strong value of many in the rural community, James noted that the connection between religion and school is rarely bridged, perhaps due to fear over the separation of church and state. Because of this reluctance to develop this connection between the church and schools beyond allowing the churches to provide support for students in need, an opportunity to connect with rural students' value of community and closeness may be missed. As James stated from his own experience, "A lot of my intrinsic motivation comes from the church. And I think that's a good thing. Some people sometimes think, 'Oh, there's no place for that in education or learning,' but I think there

is a place for it." Even with reluctance to invite too much collaboration between the churches and the schools, including an ethic of care in the school curriculum brings into the learning environment a value of the rural community that is fostered within the church community.

Value of Autonomy and Self-Sufficiency

Interestingly, while the ethic of care present in the rural community means that people invite themselves into one another's lives for the purposes of providing support and meeting one another's needs, the rural community only seems to value this level of involvement from certain individuals and groups. In the case of the government or those viewed as "outsiders" to the community, individuals in the rural community prefer to handle their concerns only with the help of trusted allies. For example, Maureen described her experience seeking help from the welfare office when she and her husband needed help caring for her aging mother:

> Me and my husband, we didn't make nothing. They told me, "I don't know if you realize it or not but she's going to have to have somebody around the clock." So, I had to work on that, and I said, "I think I can arrange that," but I didn't know how hard it was going to be. So, I just did whatever I could, and people got after me about going to welfare to get some help, so I finally went. The questions they ask you: what you own, you know, and everything else except what time you went to the bathroom. But, I finally went and they asked me all them questions. They said, "You may owe some bills that I don't know about." I told them, "You listen here. You forget I come up here, I don't want a damn thing you got." I said, "I'm not too sorry to work to pay the bills." I said, "You just forget I come up here." I said, "It's none of your business what I owe or what I make or nothing."

For Maureen this was just another example of how this government program failed to operate with the type of ethic of care valued in the rural community. Her mother had a similar experience:

> That was when Momma went to welfare. People kept after her she ought to go, and she went. Well, we was having such a hard time, and they asked her all kinds of questions and she told them the truth, and they said "Well, you can sell your hogs and buy your children some shoes."
>
> They told her to sell the hogs, you know. She said, "Well, I thought about that and then I had another thought, 'Why take from the mouth and get them shoes?'" And, she said, "I don't want nothing you got and forget I come up here."

In Maureen's experience, her family's and community's value of self-sufficiency made it difficult to ask for help, so questions about their work or prioritization of resources were viewed as insults in the face of one of their core values. While community members might share with one another, those who were able to provide for themselves were expected to be self-sufficient. According to Jan:

> Then it was just huge that all the money that was made had to go to food and the home. Maybe not even so much to clothing, but you had to eat. I think that's how you learned to live off vegetables, pick your own, bring them in, and wash them up. Going back to your city kids; they just went to the store.

Based on the responses of the interview and narrative participants, being trusted by authorities to handle one's own business is a strong value among the entire rural community, extending to the school environment as well. Megan noted that the "freedom to spread wings" within the district is not something that is present in other places, but it is greatly appreciated in the area due to the strong value of autonomy in the community.

Barbara described how she appreciates the autonomy provided by the administration at the school where she works:

> I give credit here. [The principal] isn't in your shit about how to teach. You can come in and sort of run your classroom the way you want to. You can have a PLC partner as long as you're teaching the same type subject. She doesn't care how it's taught and you don't have to look in this person's classroom and it is the same as your PLC partner. I like that about her unless it gets to too controversial an issue and you know... here, you aren't bound by some things. I'm sure at some schools they hand you a thing and say, "These are your lesson plans for the year, and you have to start on lesson one and go to lesson 300."

Unlike in some rural areas, which have experienced decreases in local control that have resulted in policy-making that is separate from the needs of the rural community (Casey, 1998; Schramm-Pate, 2002), the value of autonomy that exists in this community makes Megan feel like this district can implement culturally relevant curricula around the CCSS with great success. She described how this autonomy can work to the advantage of this district:

> The autonomy was a very interesting characteristic that allows teachers to make these decisions that people are saying, "Hey, with Common Core, it's not going to tell you what to teach; these are just some broad parameters with skills and processes." Well, we were very good with that in [the county]. We did it. That's exactly what happened. Nobody told you you had to talk about the Regulators. We could use those resources and, as a team, plan ways to maximize the resources. So there's a lot of autonomy...So, I don't worry about [the county] in the transition because of that kind of foundation we set with teachers. To me it came from the autonomy. Nobody told us, "This is what you have to teach. On this day, you'd better be on page blah blah blah," and that's different across the state...So, that's a strength, I think, for [the county].

As someone from the district office, Stanley supported this autonomy, saying, “I mean they're professionals. A lot of them have master’s degrees and National Board Certification. They don't want you to tell them what to teach.” As professionals, the community anticipates that the educators will put in the work necessary to help their students meet the standards of the CCSS.

Value of Hard Work and Survivor’s Grit

The value of hard work was identified by all of the teachers participating in this study as being indicative of the county’s community as a whole. However, the importance of working hard “for yourself as well as the person that you’re working for,” to use Carl’s words; earning one’s way; and making up for potential deficiencies in education and access were highlighted as significant for the area’s rural population. According to Max, “They all have their values based on work, work, and more work and making the money.” Jan asserted that “back then it was very important that you took advantage of time if you weren’t going to church or in school that you were working and making use of the time to bring in income.”

For Megan, this value of hard work was developed out of survival. While survival is a basic human instinct, Megan noted that the survival of the rural area differed from that of the urban area. She described the people of the rural community as “gritty, but for a different reason, a different type of grit, like in surviving the urban environment versus a rural environment...still needing the grit but for different reasons. I appreciate the hard work of that grit.” Thus, while Sim (1988) has identified hard work as a negative connotation of the rural community, the participants highlighted hard work and this

survivor's grit as a strength of the community. Due to issues of access to resources, the rural community developed a sense of self-sufficiency that necessitated hard work from all members of the family and community. As Maureen described:

> I went to work when I was 17, and, if I would have worked 14 more days, I would have worked 46 years [at the mill]. I was promoted to the fourth grade, and I never did go a day in the fourth grade...I quit school to help Momma. Momma had a hard life. I quit school to help her. She didn't want me to do it, but I done it anyhow...Had five young-uns and I just quit and helped her out. I bet you I was cooking when I wasn't over 12 or 13 years old...Well, I just took all the housework off of her I could.

For Maureen, work was necessary for survival and was no more or less than that. This survivor's grit was demonstrated in Maureen's response to employees at the mill, who wanted to celebrate her retirement:

> I told [the bosses at the mill], "Don't you tell nobody I want to retire." Then someone came to me later in the week and said, "If I was you, I'd be ashamed." I said, "For what?" "Not wanting to be getting your gift when you retire. Not telling us you gonna retire." I said, "Look, I don't want a damn thing nobody down here's got." I said, "I don't want the ceremony when someone retires and then we all got to talk about it." I said, "No, I don't want nothing none of 'ems got." So that killed that. [The bosses at the mill] said, "If we need you, will you come back and help us out?" I said, "If *I* need it, I will, and if I don't, I won't."

While improvements in technology and transportation and increases in interactions between the rural and urban communities in the county after consolidation have lessened the need for the survivor's grit that was essential in earlier generations of county residents, this value of hard work remains ingrained in the rural community and

lends itself to the perspective of many in the rural community that the work put into education functions as a means for employment.

Conclusive Analysis

Analysis of the co-constructed meanings of the participants' responses seems to support the notion that the inclusion of rural culture in the curricula taught in this urban county is necessary in order to improve the cultural relevancy of the curricula for all students and to decrease the division that may exist between individuals of different cultural and economic backgrounds. Just as Sher (1988) has advocated for the inclusion of local traditions, values, and customs in policy-making, recognition of the values and traditions of the area within academic curricula may serve to counteract the deficit-based perspective of the rural community and the competitive environment of the community's schools. As Casey (1998) has stated, "We are all rural people, at least by virtue of our inheritance as citizens of a nation that for generations lived an agrarian existence" (pp. 19-20). Thus, this historical interdependence requires a valuing of the rural story (even within an urban county) and acknowledgement of the impact of cultural messages that privilege urban over rural.

The results of the document analysis, teacher survey, semi-structured interviews, and generational narratives revealed rural values within this urban county that align with the findings of previous research on rural culture, including respect for the environment and others' needs (Sim, 1988); a sense of community, family, and church connectedness (Alexander, 2010; Casey, 1998), and strong ties to family and community history (Casey, 1998; Vernon-Feagans et al., 2010). Additionally, some of the challenges faced by rural

communities were experienced by the rural population in this urban county, including issues with technological infrastructure and transportation (Alexander, 2010; Vernon-Feagans et al., 2010), negative stereotypes that mythologize and compartmentalize rural Southerners (Barron, 2006; Berg & Dassman, 1990; Kincheloe, Pinar, & Slattery, 1994; Margolis, 1979; Schramm-Pate, 2002; Stewart, 1996); and an influx of newcomers that rearranges power and value orientations within the community (Rye, 2011; Smith & Krannich, 2000). Yet, this community experienced unique challenges where urban and rural cultures collide to create a new, rurban culture.

Among the complexities revealed through analysis of the data were varying roles and perceptions that could lead residents to be community "insiders" and "outsiders" simultaneously, an acceptance of progress with a coinciding desire to conserve the past, shifting relationships within and among different racial/ethnic groups, economic disparity that cuts across racial lines but also contributes to racial segregation, and differences in educational values that impact families' approaches to schooling. Because these rurban complexities impact and are impacted by connection to others and nature (see place-conscious education; Theobald, 1997), a Southern distinction that is both self-constructed and constructed by others (see social psychoanalysis; Kincheloe, Pinar, & Slattery, 1994), and political forces that increase the social capital of some while decreasing the cultural capital of others (see critical pedagogy of place; Gruenewald, 2003; Rye, 2011), schools in this area could improve the cultural relevancy of the curricula by both honoring the local traditions of the community and analyzing the origins of the power differential, racial differences, economic disparity, and different educational values that impact the

community. One way to bring these values into the academic curricula developed around the CCSS is to construct a transformative curriculum using a critical rurban pedagogy that attends to rurban complexity and the rural values of care, community, and closeness; autonomy and self-sufficiency; and hard work and survivor's grit.

CHAPTER VIII

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

For many of the study's participants, the notions of rigor and relevance were prominent in their responses around curriculum. While attention to rigor was prominent in the development of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS; NGA Center & CCSSO, 2010), the survey responses indicated a need for the adaptation of locally-developed curriculum around the CCSS to be authentic, place-based, and culturally inclusive, with the values of the local community integrated throughout the curriculum in an interdisciplinary fashion. This type of cultural inclusivity differed from the type of culturally relevant curriculum described by the interview and narrative participants as already enacted in one of the high schools in the area with their classes in agriculture, welding, and auto mechanics. According to the participants, culturally relevant curricula that attend to the needs of rural students in the area should move beyond these stand-alone classes only taken by students in the Career and Technical Education (CTE) program toward full integration into the core academic courses (English/Language Arts, Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies) taken by all students at all levels of education (not just at the high school level). In order to integrate the rural values of care, community, and closeness; autonomy and self-sufficiency; and hard work and survivor's grit identified by the participants into the curricula, a critical rurban pedagogy that

merges a critical pedagogy of place with the complexities of rurban culture may serve as a foundation from which to build these culturally relevant curricula.

Critical Rurban Pedagogy

According to Gruenewald's (2003) critical pedagogy of place (described in detail in "Chapter II: Theoretical Framework"), education should examine the intersections between social politics, ecological and human relationships, and regional history and culture in order to place learning in a geographical context that allows for both the celebration and critical examination of one's localized experience. However, participation in this critical examination within a rurban locale requires attention to the power differential, racial differences, economic disparity, and different educational values that comprise rurban complexity. In developing a critical rurban pedagogy around which to construct curricula that are culturally relevant for rural students in an urban county, the various aspects of rurban complexity must be addressed explicitly along side the rural values that may serve as concepts from which to construct curricular units (i.e., care, community, and closeness; autonomy and self-sufficiency; and hard work and survivor's grit). Constructing curricula within this critical rurban pedagogy, thus, requires the utilization of transformative curricular design.

Transformative Curricular Design

The transformative approach to curricular design developed by Henderson and Hawthorne (2000) and practiced largely (though not consciously) by the school district in this study attends to the concerns and perspectives of the specific school and community for which the curriculum is developed and also supports subject learning that is thinking

centered with performance-based outcomes and a multi-literacy approach; self learning that includes awareness of oneself in relation to others; and social learning that examines issues of equity, diversity, and civility. According to transformative curriculum design, the development of integrated curriculum that incorporates local perspectives and that addresses subject, self, and social learning involves deliberation, the establishment of vision, the assessment of learning outcomes, and curriculum planning (Henderson & Hawthorne, 2000).

Deliberation on curriculum. While NC's adoption of the CCSS did not involve the specific input of educational stakeholders in the research area, the local school district did involve all of the district's teachers, administrators, and curriculum specialists in early discussions around the CCSS and in the development of vertically- and horizontally-aligned curriculum maps that address the standards. Through more than two years of deliberation, the district's educators worked to tweak previously-existing curriculum maps that had been developed over the course of five years and to create new curriculum maps that addressed areas of need as identified by the district's educators ("Stanley," personal communication, June 25, 2012). According to Valerie, teams of educators worked to examine each standard and asked the following question of each: "What is really essential for a student to know and be able to do at the end of each year?" The educators' responses to this question became the essential learning outcome for each standard. With this essential learning outcome serving as the key learning goal for the end of the academic year, the district's educators created mini-goals on the path to the essential learning outcome. Valerie described this process:

> So, we had what we would call a profile of an end-of-the-year pre-k, kindergartner, first grade, etc. Then, we worked backwards from there. We said, "If this is what they look like at the end of the year, what do they look like at the end of the first 9 weeks? Second 9 weeks? Third 9 weeks? Fourth 9 weeks? End of the year?"

This process began with smaller curriculum mapping teams, who had additional conversations with their schools' Professional Learning Communities (PLCs). Then, it was the goal of each school's representatives to address the feedback provided by each school's PLCs in follow-up curriculum mapping meetings. According to Valerie, these teams of professionals represented diverse student groups (e.g., Exceptional Children, English Language Learners, and Academically and Intellectually Gifted) with insights on instructional tools, like leveled texts, that might address student differences in interest, background, and academic performance level. Additionally, Stanley and Valerie described that these curricular meetings with diverse groups of educators led to the development of "I can" statements for students based on the educator-developed essential learning outcomes and nine-week statements. An example of an "I can" statement for a kindergartener might be, "I can point to the illustrations in a book," which enables students to develop a vision for the academic year's learning goals and provides educators with assessment goals for the year ("Valerie," personal communication, December 10, 2012).

Assessment of outcomes. At this point in the transformative curricular design process, Henderson and Hawthorne (2000) have advocated for the building of a vision for the curriculum. However, based on the extensive work that the district's educators

completed in unpacking the CCSS and developing various learning goals around these standards, a natural next step in the process was the development of assessment. According to Stanley, the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) had been putting pressure on the district to develop assessments around the standards earlier in the process, but district leadership felt strongly that the deliberation around the CCSS had to be thorough in order to increase buy-in across the district and to help teachers develop a deeper understanding of the CCSS as "standards" to guide the curriculum development process locally.

After more than two years of deliberation, the curriculum teams used the "I can" statements to develop common formative assessments based on the outcomes that students should meet at the end of each nine-week period. These assessments were developed so that all grade levels across the district would have worked toward the same learning outcomes during a nine-week period even though there would be no expectation that each grade level be in sequence with one another throughout that time ("Stanley," personal communication, June 25, 2012). While the common assessments were designed to imitate the structure that students might see once national tests around the CCSS are implemented (i.e., paper- or computer-based exams) via NC's participation in the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC), alternative forms of assessment, like using "finial clickers" and "outdoor learning experiments" were also encouraged in order to move away from the heavy use of multiple-choice ("Stanley," personal communication, June 25, 2012). According to Stanley, "[Students] produce an artifact or common assessment or science notebook and say, 'I can do *this*, Mom."

Such an assessment structure provides teachers and their PLCs the flexibility to develop classroom-, grade-, or content-level assessment that addresses the individual needs and interests of the students while still addressing the essential questions developed around the essential learning outcomes (and from which "I can" statements were generated). This flexibility also extends into methods of instruction, as Stanley articulated:

> We are not telling people you will read this novel; you will use this piece of music. We give examples, but [if] you choose something different than what we say, you just need to align it with your essential learning outcome, and when you meet with your team, you need to be able to defend—well not defend—but you need to be able to say, "Here's what I did, and it worked for 70% of my students," and you may find out that somebody else tried something different, but we don't really tell people, "You will teach this book or you will teach this."

Thus, while exemplars were developed by the district's educators as guides from which teachers and teacher-led teams could develop their own curricular units, the lack of a district-wide vision of a curriculum that is culturally inclusive means that it is up to the discretion of each individual teacher to incorporate local culture into the curriculum: a long-standing expectation that has had varying results according to survey and interview participants.

Establishment of vision. While a vision of academic expectations around the CCSS was inherent in the district's process of developing essential learning outcomes, nine-week statements, and "I can" statements based on the standards, conversations around "problems, issues, themes, or topics intended to focus student engagement and connect content over time" (Henderson & Hawthorne, 2000, p. 86) were limited to

discussions of gaps in the academic achievement of Black and Latino students as compared with White students in the district. The survey results also revealed that cultural relevancy is rarely included in curricular enactments in the middle school that served as a research site for this study. When culture is purposefully included, it typically involves country studies (with the sampling of food and music from various countries), review of N.C. history based on state-level requirements for fourth- and eighth-grade level Social Studies curricula, or the directing of students to literature that they might find interesting.

Additionally, the survey and interview respondents indicated that professional development rarely involves discussions of culture or place, again, leaving it up to the individual teachers to address on their own. The teachers, who had received professional development on such topics as outreach and poverty, did so at their own expense and often outside of the county. James suggested that due to the lack of local professional development, many of the teachers in the school, who are in graduate programs, share research as their own form of professional development. He said:

> A lot of people, who, I think, are studying, send stuff around to people, and those of us who are in school, we see an article that's very good and we do discuss it. But, we don't discuss that much in our faculty meetings; we don't discuss it at all in our district meetings. And so, are there any things that aren't just an ad hoc type of thing? No. I can't think of anything. And, it should be, because at some point it's going to kick us in the behind.

As Vernon-Feagans, Gallagher, and Kainz (2010) have noted, that this lack of access to professional development found in many rural areas has a direct impact on rural students'

transitions to school as well as rural schools' abilities to recruit teachers. Thus, the school district could improve its ability to connect the curricula that they are developing with the culture of the area in order to improve students' engagement with the content and help the students develop critical-thinking and problem-solving skills that are immediately relevant to their life experiences and local environment.

After developing assessments around the student learning outcomes, Valerie indicated that the district's educators began the process of developing curricular units to meet the learning goals identified for each nine-week period. Yet, without a unified vision of culturally relevant curricula within a framework of critical rurban pedagogy, these units are likely to continue an exclusion of culture and place that has existed in the district regardless of the standard course of study employed. For Henderson and Hawthorne (2000), local narratives serve as the basis for the subject, self, and social learning of transformative education and can, therefore, provide the concepts from which culturally relevant curricula that examine local context can be constructed.

Enactment of curriculum. Participating in an interrogation of local context as part of a critical rurban pedagogy that is aligned to the CCSS encourages collaboration between schools, universities, and communities that are seen as "structures and practices that help rethink the classroom as the fundamental site of teaching and learning" (Gruenewald, 2003, p. 10), which involves "making a place for the cultural, political, economic, and ecological dynamics of places" (Gruenewald, 2003, pp. 10-11). According to Theobald (1997), both community members and school personnel need to enter collaboration toward this end as a "moral endeavor" (p. 122), learning from and with the

people of the community in the model of Horton's Highlander Folk School (now the Highlander Research and Education Center; see Adams & Horton, 1975; Horton, 2003; Horton, Kohl, & Kohl, 1998). Through collaboration with the community and the incorporation of local rural values into the curriculum, educators in the school district might be intentional about connecting academic content to the context of rural life in the rurban community. Some strategies may involve "local cultural studies, local nature studies, community issue-investigation and problem-solving, local internships and entrepreneurial opportunities, and induction into community decision making" (Gruenewald, 2003, p. 11), with attention to political forces impacting the local culture and environment.

According to Theobald (1997), students should be able to recognize how their daily involvement in the classroom is impacting the community as well as how they are being impacted by the community, thus making a connection between schooling and social justice. Rather than reinforcing a purpose of schooling that is to prepare students for a *future* role in the economy, a critical rurban pedagogy might involve a multidisciplinary approach that allows students to use critical analysis of past and present social, political, and economic forces to begin to shape their *current* ways of being (Theobald, 1997). As Brooke (2003) has stated, "We want students to know their local contexts well enough that they can celebrate them" while also being "able to critique their localities" (p. 63). By using "nontraditional teaching approaches, such as construction of oral histories, peer teaching, off-campus research projects, and portfolios" (Kincheloe, Pinar, & Slattery, 1994, p. 434) as part of a critical rurban pedagogy, educators might

help students (from rural or urban backgrounds) develop an authentic understanding of self-as-rurban-southerner that allows one to "reenter politically the public sphere in meaningful and committed ways" (Pinar, 1991, p. 174). Using the rural values and rurban complexity identified in this study, the following pages demonstrate how curricular units around the CCSS can be developed around concepts that are relevant to the area's students.

Ethic of care, community, and closeness. At the high school level, teachers of Trigonometry and Earth and Environmental Sciences and might work across disciplines to address the following standards: "CCSS.Math.Content.HSF-TF.C.9: Prove the addition and subtraction formulas for sine, cosine, and tangent and use them to solve problems" (CCSSI, 2012d) and "N.C. Essential Standards.EEn.2.4.2: Evaluate human influences on water quality in North Carolina's river basins, wetlands and tidal environments" (Public Schools of North Carolina, 2012a).

The rurban complexities of the power differential and differences in educational values impact the local community as increased urbanization and differing views on the usage of natural resources challenge locals' views on their relationship to the local environment. The closeness and care that the rural community has for one another extends to their care of the land. According to Kincheloe, Pinar, & Slattery (1994), a positive quality of Southern culture tends to be "a sense of closeness to the land and the rhythms of nature" (p. 419). Within the local rural community, the environment has work-related and cultural implications, as generations of people have lived off the land for employment or to feed their families. Additionally, the cultural heritage of the

community, from the early Native American communities through the Revolution to the present day, has impacted and been influenced by the local river system running through the area (Eno River Association, 2013). Within a rural high school in an urban county, scientific and mathematical study of the local river valley can serve to engage students with differing educational and professional goals by drawing on the ethic of care, community, and closeness valued in the community.

While certain parts of the local river are protected regions due to the efforts of locals during the late sixties and early seventies to protect the river from additional damming needed due to increased urbanization (Eno River Association, 2013), other parts of the river are used as a water supply for the area's residents. By taking a trip to two different parts of the river system (the dammed portion used for the local water supply and the preserved portion of the river), students can study the water quality to examine the human impact of varying levels and types of water usage. They also can examine the rock structures around the river dam and use trigonometric functions and the Mohr Circle to determine the stability of the dam based on any plane stress that may exist in the supporting foundation. Using these findings, class discourse might involve debate around how connection to the land has been positive (e.g., protecting the land from increased urbanization) and how this strong reliance on the land may have had unintended consequences, such as impact on water quality, depletion of usable water sources, etc.

Value of autonomy and self-sufficiency. At the elementary level, a first grade teacher and the school's Theatre Arts teacher might work together to address the

following standards: “CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.1.4: Identify words and phrases in stories or poems that suggest feelings or appeal to the senses” (CCSSI, 2012d) and “N.C. Essential Standards.Theatre Arts.1.C.1.2: Use creative drama techniques, such as storytelling or puppetry, to demonstrate vocal variety” (Public Schools of North Carolina, 2012a).

Using lived experience as a starting point for a critical rurban pedagogy, the concept of identity (racial, gender, political, rural, urban, etc.) might provide a foundation for examining the social and historical constructions that shape students’ meaning-making and their connection to place (Kincheloe, Pinar, & Slattery, 1994). Even in the primary grades, students can explore the rurban complexities of the power differential and racial differences that have impacted the community by connecting their lived experiences to those of their peers. According to Kincheloe, Pinar, and Slattery (1994), “In studying the ‘politics of identity,’ we discover that who we are is invariably related to who others are, as well as to who we have been and want to become” (p. 431). Such a politics of identity “would be multicultural, gender diffused, class confrontational, and socially inclusive” (Kincheloe, Pinar, & Slattery, 1994) and, in the case of urban areas with significant rural populations, would recognize the cultural similarities and differences that impact the community.

Because of the rich history of the area during the Revolution, the Civil War, and the Civil Rights Movement, the teachers could read aloud short autobiographies of various local individuals’ experiences with oppression throughout history and their struggles for self-determinism. Then, discussion among the students could be facilitated

to help them identify the strategies used by the authors to appeal to the readers' senses, bringing them into the experiences. Through the use of autobiography, students "can confront the meaning of the given world, reject it, reformulate it, and reconstruct it with a social vision that is authentically the individual's" (Kincheloe & Pinar, 1991, p. 21). Thus, with the autobiographies as a model (and with the teachers' assistance), the students could record personal stories that demonstrate their own experiences overcoming personal challenges with the desire to make their own way. Using these autobiographical experiences, the students could act out their stories with their own physicality or through the use of puppets, paying particular attention to vocal inflections that highlight the sensory words of the autobiographies. Then, because "individual autobiographical work needs to be complemented by group process" (Pinar, 1991, p. 180) in order to allow for an understanding of self via understanding of others, class discourse following the performances could engage students in reflection on the similarities and differences between the students' experiences and between the students' experiences and those of the local historical figures about whom they read previously. Additionally, discussion could focus on both the affirmative qualities of self-sufficiency and desiring autonomy and the limitations of such a value. Through the use of narratives and storytelling (Kincheloe, Pinar, & Slattery, 1994), the students might critically examine the various social constructions that influence their daily lives and their connections to others and to their environments, even if they are too young to understand the meaning of social constructions.

Value of hard work and survivor's grit. By the time the students enter middle school, they are more capable of understanding phenomenological processes. Thus, in a seventh grade classroom, teachers might take an interdisciplinary approach to address the following standards: "CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.7.9: Compare and contrast a fictional portrayal of a time, place, or character and a historical account of the same period as a means of understanding how authors of fiction use or alter history" (CCSSI, 2012d) and "N.C. Essential Standards.Social Studies.7.G.1.2: Explain how demographic trends (e.g., population growth and decline, push/pull factors and urbanization) lead to conflict, negotiation, and compromise in modern societies and regions" (Public Schools of North Carolina, 2012a).

In order to connect self to community, Kincheloe, Pinar, and Slattery (1994) have advocated for "interdisciplinary programs in southern studies" (p. 430) that draw on the affirmative characteristics of the region and utilize lived experience through "autobiographical, ethnographic, and phenomenological processes" (p. 431). Using the rich history of the textile mills that used to comprise the largest industry in the area, students might compare accounts of mill life from Southern fiction written by local authors to accounts of mill life provided by community members, who used to work in the local mills. Southern literature, specifically, "has portrayed the belief that the present is continually instructed by a living past" (Kincheloe & Pinar, 1991, p. 9), thus serving as a rich source for discourse around Southern culture and history. By collecting oral histories of these former mill workers, like study participant Maureen, students could examine the rurban complexities of the power differential, racial differences, and

economic disparity that existed between mill workers and owners and the urbanization that impacted life on the mountain, where many of the mill workers used to live. Students could, then, review primary source documents from the Depression era and a documentary, *True Lives: The Uprising of '34* by Stoney, Helfand, and Rostock (1995), to compare accounts from the documents, the film, Southern fiction, and the oral histories of the largest mill-worker labor strike in the South. According to Marlette (2001):

> The Uprising of '34, as it would come to be called, was swept from memory, not only in my family, but in mill villages all across the South, in a kind of collective amnesia, like it was some shameful secret, a painful, traumatic experience of abuse and betrayal that was best left buried and forgotten. Union was a dirty word in the South.

After a trip to the western portion of the town where the mill used to be located to compare the obvious urbanization that exists in the area to the former mill workers' accounts of life in the area during the height of the textile industry, students could participate in critical discourse in class revolving around the historical impact that mill life had on shaping the community and the visible economic divide that exists between regions of the county (the old mill region includes higher poverty and lower-income housing). This discourse also could involve reflection on how the survival mindset and the value of work exhibited by the former generations in the area have influenced the culture of the area in both positive and negative ways. For example, students might examine how the survivor's grit valued by the community has helped the community thrive even with the decline of the textile industry. However, the students might also scrutinize how the survival-based fear of unionization from the "Uprising of '34" has

continued to impact interpersonal relationships and working conditions in the area and the distrust that exists between workers and authority (to include the government) in many pockets of the community.

While these examples demonstrate how a focused vision of cultural relevancy in the curriculum that attends to rurban complexity and rural values can be incorporated into any academic discipline or grade level to address any combination of CCSS and N.C. Essential Standards, these examples do not suggest scripted unit plans that limit educators' choices of texts, resources, topics, time periods, etc. Instead, these examples are intended to illustrate how students might engage with academic content in meaningful ways that promote the values identified by the community; acknowledge the complexities of the area's culture; and critique the traditions that might narrow students' perspectives on their local, national, and global communities. The possibilities are many as long as educators in the area consciously approach curriculum development through a transformative design based in a critical rurban pedagogy that allows for both celebration and critique of local history, values, and traditions.

Research Study Strengths

By collecting the narratives of individuals from diverse backgrounds and experiences, who live and/or work in the area, this study was purposeful in its inclusion of community perspectives in the development of academic curricula that might provide the rigor and relevance that study participants identified as critical to the achievement of identified student learning outcomes around the CCSS and N.C. Essential Standards. The collection of generational narratives allowed for the examination of values and traditions

that have been long-embedded into the culture of the area as well as those cultural experiences that have varied over time. By attending to both the commonalities and unique experiences of the survey, interview, and narrative participants, a robust data set was collected from which to develop themes that addressed gaps in the cultural relevancy of the district-developed curriculum documents.

Through the co-construction of meaning between the researcher and the participants, key themes were highlighted as concepts around which curricula could be built and cultural complexities were identified and intentionally included in reflections on curricular design. Identifying these themes is a time-consuming process that can be overwhelming for teachers given the ever-increasing responsibilities of the profession, especially considering the fact that thousands of individual codes were grouped and re-grouped into broad, yet meaningful, themes that illustrate some of the common values of the participants regardless of their positionalities. However, with the access that the researcher had to prior research on the rural-urban distinction and the strengths, challenges, and historical and cultural signifiers of the rural experience as well as the collective experiences of the study participants, some of this work could be done for the school district to provide a foundation from which local educators can adapt their curricula to be culturally relevant for rural students in the area. Since this study had limitations around participant access, however, the school district is encouraged to partner with the local institutions of higher education (IHEs), who, according to Megan (one of the study participants) and prior research on school-university-community collaborations, have the time and resources to participate in research to inform the

practices of the local district. Through increased collaboration, IHEs could continue to collect the narratives of the district's constituents in order to expand the possibilities for curricular concepts built around local values and to examine changing trends as the area continues to become increasingly urbanized.

Research Study Limitations

As described in "Chapter VI: Methodology," the school district selected as a research site for the study was chosen specifically due to the work that had already been done to develop curricula around the CCSS as well as the area's designation as an urban county with a significant rural population and the presence of a university with a DPI-approved teacher education program. However, because this school district was chosen, participant access for the study was limited. While the district provided unlimited access to curriculum documents and the expertise of district-level administrators as well as a research space within a local school, the data collected from the survey and teacher interviews were limited to one particular rural middle school in the area by the district-level administrator that oversees research within the district. While the perspectives of other educators and community members were obtained through the collected narratives, which were acquired separately from the research within the school district, insights provided by a majority of the teachers in the study were assuredly influenced by the teachers' experiences within this one particular school.

Additionally, while the narratives provided insights into generational shifts and sustained traditions in the area, only one representative from each of four different generations (persons in their 90s, 60s, 40s, and 20s) provided narratives on their

experiences in the area. To remain inclusive of differing experiences within the same generations, additional generational narratives could be collected and analyzed.

Future Research Plans

In the future, the types of expanded participant access within the schools and the community discussed previously will be sought in order to further justify or revise the themes developed as a result of the data analysis and member checks. However, these additional attempts at data collection in this area would only serve as one part of a larger research agenda. Because of anticipated differences between rural cultures within the Coastal Plain, Piedmont, and Mountain regions of NC, this study will be replicated across the state in order to identify themes that may be common to the rural experience throughout the state as well as those that make the rural experience unique depending on one's location in the state.

As explained in "Chapter V: Literature on Educational Collaborations," this study and a future expanded study were imagined with a greater goal of informing a curriculum reform effort that involves schools, universities, and communities in a collaborative effort to improve the cultural relevance of academic curricula for rural students throughout the state. This is especially important in rurban areas, like the research site for this study, where the needs of rural students are more likely to be overshadowed by urban-centricity. Each collection of educational stakeholders holds specific expertise that is valuable to the curriculum development process and that can improve the educational experience for the state's students. With school-university-community collaborations identified as critical to the curricular reform process (Goodlad, 1988), the work that schools, universities, and

communities have been doing in isolation to improve local communities could be improved if the diverse insights and experiences of various educational stakeholders were included in collective problem-solving.

Research Study Conclusions

Supported by research on the rural-urban distinction, rural culture, and school-university-community collaborations, this case study on rural culture within an urban area may help support the use of transformative curricular design informed by a critical rurban pedagogy to be used by urban counties with significant populations of rural students in order to better integrate rural students into these urbanized schools. Using the "students' culture as a vehicle for learning" (Ladson-Billings, 1995a, p. 161), culturally relevant curriculum might incorporate opportunities for students to develop academic success ("the literacy, numeracy, technological, social and political skills" needed to be "active participants in a democracy" (Ladson-Billings, 1995a, p. 160)), cultural competence ("the ability to function effectively in one's culture of origin" (Ladson-Billings, 2000, p. 219)), and critical consciousness ("the ability to understand the political nature of a situation, critique the status quo, and proactively try to change it" (Leonard, Napp, & Adeleke, 2009, p. 6)).

While the CCSS attend to some of the content and skills necessary to develop academic success, the role of local curriculum developers might be to incorporate opportunities for students to develop cultural competence and critical consciousness. This might be done by "using circumstances that arise in the community as forms of official knowledge" and connecting "content to social justice and liberation themes" (Leonard et

al., 2009, p. 6) through lessons that integrate culture, provide opportunities for critical inquiry, and recognize multiple perspectives (Sampson & Garrison-Wade, 2011). Additionally, the inclusion of local literacies (e.g., oral or written histories); media literacy (including critique of stereotypes); and local culture, language, and dialect can provide opportunities to develop cultural competence and critical consciousness through a collaborative process that involves students from rural and urban/suburban backgrounds. Such efforts at curriculum development require an understanding of local culture as well as collaboration that draws on various expertise and allows for the implementation of "coherent, rigorous curriculum for all students" (Main, 2012, p. 74).

By identifying common and diverse themes regarding local rural culture and "systematically includ[ing] student culture in the classroom as authorized or critical knowledge" (Ladson-Billings, 1995b, p. 483), school-university-community collaborations may move more efficiently and effectively from philosophical discussion to action and plan-implementation that are grounded in cultural awareness and focused on student learning. Additionally, school-university-community collaborations informed by an understanding of local rural culture may result in increased efforts to provide mentoring and support for teacher education students working with rural students as well as additional education to increase awareness of rural settings among teacher education students (White et al., 2011). White et al. (2011) have asserted that one-size-fits-all models of teacher education are ineffective in preparing future teachers to teach rural students.

With more awareness of rural culture, local teacher education programs might better prepare future educators for teaching practices that are inclusive of both urban and rural cultures, traditions, and values. Because the experiences of rural individuals have been marginalized through increased urbanization in the US and because the CCSS Initiative calls on state and local entities to develop curricula that attend to the needs of area students, educational stakeholders within the schools, universities, and communities have the opportunity to align local curricula with the CCSS in ways that are culturally meaningful for local students, regardless of background.

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